SILENCE
AND OTHER STORIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

(L. N. ANDREYEV)

"JUDAS ISCARIOT"

FORMING WITH "ELEAZAR" AND "BEN TOBIT"

A BIBLICAL TRILOGY

TRANSLATED BY

W. H. LOWE

LONDON: FRANCIS GRIFFITHS

SILENCE

and other Stories

[Leonid Nikolaevich Andreev]

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN OF (L. N. ANDREYEV)

BY

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(translit.: Molchanie ...)

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PREFACE

Leoníd Nikoláïvitch Andréyev, unlike Maxím Górky, which is a *nom de guerre*, is our author's personal name. He was born at Aryól (Orel) in 1871, and studied there, and afterwards at the University of Moscow in circumstances of great privation. After taking his degree he earned his living for some time as a law-reporter. His first literary efforts were laughed at, and he failed to find a publisher. But when at last he managed to place his foot on the first rung of the ladder, he mounted by leaps and bounds into popularity, ultimately cutting out even Maxím Górky in the race for popular favour. But so uncertain everywhere is the *fama popularis auræ*, and so fickle is the taste of the Russian reading public, that one may venture, without much danger of error, to foretell that before long he will be supplanted by some fresh idol.

Meanwhile, one of a band of youths of genius, including such men as Górky, Skitáletz, Búnin (poet), Tyelyeshóv, Tchírikov, and Shalyápin (operatic bass), he celebrated a few years ago the second lustrum of his literary activity. During those ten years, and the following, he has produced three volumes of Tales of about 300 pages each, besides several stories of considerable length published in "Collections" of various

authors, together with some plays, which have achieved considerable success upon the boards in Russia, and also in some of the Continental capitals.

In early life L. Andréyev was, in common with a great number of the youth of Russia, afflicted with melancholia, the result of which was that he made three several attempts on his life. Happily for himself and the public, these attempts proved futile—possibly they were only half-hearted. At present he is living a quiet, happy life in company with his second wife, and spends the summer months in a Swedish-built bungalow on the Black Rivulet near Teriok, in Finland, at an easy distance from S. Petersburg.

Melancholy has indeed claimed Russian literature for her own, especially since the beginning of the reactionary reign of Alexander III. And no wonder, for the conditions of life in Russia have since then been such, that those of the poor Saxon under the heel of the Conqueror, some 800 years ago, were paradise in comparison.

But over and above the melancholy inherent in the Slav temperament, and the superimposed melancholy of Russian surroundings, L. Andréyev seems in his own private capacity to be a man who has "supped upon horrors." He has been well styled the prose "Poet of Human Suffering." He plunges his reader into the deepest abyss of human misery, apparently in order to raise him to the highest plane of Divine sympathy, where he may be able *de tout pardonner*. For we cannot

believe that all this pathos is wasted in merely producing "a new thrill."

L. Andréyev possesses a most vivid imagination, but it is almost too lurid, if not actually morbid Only very rarely does he write a tale which by a stretch of imagination may be said to have a happy ending: so much so that the title of nearly every one of his tales might be "The pity of it!" Though he usually writes with such convincing power, that he succeeds in making his reader pity even the most abandoned, still he too often so piles up the agony as to bid fair, if not to turn his most heartrending tragedies into comedy, at all events to defeat his own ends by his want of reticence. One may aptly apply to him a well-known critic's dictum concerning George Eliot's *Spanish Gipsy*, and say that in his writings "suffering is overcharged until it becomes almost intolerable, and affects not so much the heart as the nerves." He is indeed a very voluptuary of sorrow, and is as repellant as he is seductive.

He, if not exactly a follower, has been at all events a student of Nitzsche, that maddest of geniuses, and this study has naturally not increased his cheerfulness, though it is true that Nitzsche affirms most distinctly that he is not a pessimist. Psychology is our author's favourite theme, and especially the psychology of madness. And herein he seems to oppose the doctrine of Egoism, inasmuch as he shows that, whether it take the form of morbid self-analysis as in the case of Sergéï Petróvitch, or of arrogant self-conceit

as in the case of Dr. Antón Ignátyevitch Kerjhentzóv, that way lies madness, murder, and suicide. A monograph on the mad characters of Andréyev might, in the hands of a capable psychologist, prove as interesting as one on those of Shakespeare.

Though L. Andréyev is a decadent of the decadents, with all the faults of that school, both in thought and style, and though he sometimes falls short as an artist in that he fails *celare artem*, still his genius is all his own, and he will be for ever worthy of a high place in Russian literature.

A *traduttore* is always in danger of being accused of being a *traditore*, and this is more than usually the case in translating L. Andréyev. For, as his favourite word is "enigmatic" or "mystic," so is his style itself somewhat cryptic. To paraphrase his writings, or even to translate them freely, would be to stereotype one meaning to the exclusion of other possible interpretations. Therefore it has seemed best to translate as literally as possible, without, we hope, doing violence to the English language, so as to avoid any misunderstanding of "the thoughts clothed in the severe and mystic form of the gothic characters," to apply to our author, *mutatis mutandis*, the words he puts into the mouths of Sergéï Petróvich with regard to Nitzsche.

W. H. L.

July, 1910.

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THE LITTLE ANGEL

I

At times Sáshka* wished to give up what is called living: to cease to wash every morning in cold water, on which thin sheets of ice floated about: to go no more to the grammar school, and there to have to listen to everyone scolding him: no more to experience the pain in the small of his back and indeed over all his body, when his mother made him kneel in the corner the whole evening. But since he was only thirteen years of age, and did not know all the means by which people abandon their life at will, he continued to go to the grammar school and to kneel in the corner, and it seemed to him as if life would never end. A year would go by, and another, and yet another, and still he would be going to school, and be made to kneel in the corner. And since Sáshka possessed an indomitable and bold spirit, he could not supinely tolerate evil, and so found means to avenge himself on life. With this object in view he would thrash his companions, be rude to the Head, cheek the masters, and tell lies all day long to his teachers and to his mother—

* Short for Aleksándr. *Tr.*

but to his father only he never lied. If in a fight he got his nose broken, he would purposely make the damage worse, and howl, without shedding a single tear, but so loudly that all who heard him were fain to stop their ears to keep out the disagreeable sound. When he had howled as long as he thought advisable, he would suddenly cease, and putting out his tongue, draw in his copy-book a caricature of himself howling at an usher who pressed his fingers to his ears, while the victor stood trembling with fear. The whole copy-book was filled with caricatures, the one which most frequently occurred being that of a short stout woman beating a boy as thin as a lucifer-match with a rolling pin. Below in a large scrawling hand would be written the legend: "Beg my pardon, puppy!" and the reply, "Won't! blow'd if I do!"*

Before Christmas Sáshka was expelled from school, and when his mother attempted to thrash him, he bit her finger. This action gave him his liberty, and he left off washing in the morning, and ran about all day bullying the other boys, and had but one fear, and that was hunger, for his mother entirely left off providing for him, so that he came to depend upon the pieces of bread and potatoes, which his father secreted for him. On these conditions Sáshka found existence tolerable.

One Friday, it was Christmas Eve, he had been

* "For he was a little vulgar boy." *Tr.*

playing with the other boys, until they had dispersed to their homes, followed by the squeak of the rusty frozen wicket gate as it closed behind the last of them. It was already growing dark, and a grey snowy mist was travelling up from the country, along a dark alley ; in a low black building, which stood fronting the end of the alley, a lamp was burning with a reddish unblinking light. The frost had become more intense, and when Sáshka reached the circle of light cast by the lamp, he saw that fine dry flakes of snow were floating slowly on the air. It was high time to be getting home.

" Where have you been knocking about all night, puppy ? " exclaimed his mother, doubling her fist, without, however, striking. Her sleeves were turned up, exposing her fat white arms, and on her forehead, almost devoid of eyebrows, stood beads of perspiration. As Sáshka passed by her he recognized the familiar smell of *vodka*. His mother scratched her head with the short dirty nail of her thick fore-finger, and since it was no good scolding, she merely spat, and cried : " Statisticians !* that's what they are ! "

Sáshka shuffled contemptuously, and went behind the partition, from whence might be heard the heavy breathing of his father, Iván Sávvich, who was in a chronic state of shivering, and was now trying to warm himself by sitting on the heated

* The meaning of this reproach is explained further on in the story. *Tr.*

bench of the stove with his hands under him, palms downwards.

"Sáshka! the Svétchnikovs have invited you to the Christmas tree. The housemaid came," he whispered.

"Get along with you!" said Sáshka with incredulity.

"Fact! The old woman there has purposely not told you, but she has mended your jacket all the same."

"Non...sense," Sáshka replied, still more surprised.

The Svétchnikovs were rich people, who had put him to the grammar school, and after his expulsion had forbidden him their house.

His father once more took his oath to the truth of his statement, and Sáshka became meditative.

"Well then, move, shift a bit," he said to his father, as he leapt upon the short bench, adding:

"I won't go to those devils. I should prove jolly well too much for them, if I were to turn up. *Depraved boy*," drawled Sáshka in imitation of his patrons. "They are none too good themselves, the smug-faced prigs!"

"Oh! Sáshka, Sáshka," his father complained, sitting hunched up with cold, "you'll come to a bad end."

"What about yourself, then?" was Sáshka's rude rejoinder. "Better shut up. Afraid of the old woman. Ba! old muff!"

His father sat on in silence and shivered. A faint light found its way through a broad clink

at the top, where the partition failed to meet the ceiling by a quarter of an inch, and lay in bright patches upon his high forehead, beneath which the deep cavities of his eyes showed black.

In times gone by Iván Sávvich had been used to drink heavily, and then his wife had feared and hated him. But when he had begun to develop unmistakable signs of consumption, and could drink no longer, she took to drink in her turn, and gradually accustomed herself to *vodka*. Then she avenged herself for all she had suffered at the hands of that tall narrow-chested man, who used incomprehensible words, had lost his place through disobedience and drunkenness, and who brought home with him just such long-haired debauched and conceited fellows as himself.

In contradistinction to her husband, the more Feoktísta Petróvna drank the healthier she became, and the heavier became her fists. Now she said what she pleased, brought men and women to the house just as she chose, and sang with them noisy songs, while he lay silent behind the partition huddled together with perpetual cold, and meditating on the injustice and sorrow of human life. To everyone, with whom she talked, she complained that she had no such enemies in the world as her husband and son, they were stuck-up statisticians!

For the space of an hour his mother kept drumming into Sáshka's ears:

"But I say you shall go," punctuating each word with a heavy blow on the table, which made the

tumblers, placed on it after washing, jump and rattle again.

"But I say I won't!" Sáshka coolly replied, dragging down the corners of his mouth with the will to show his teeth—a habit which had earned for him at school the nickname of Wolfkin.

"I'll thrash you, won't I just!" cried his mother.

"All right! thrash away!"

But Feoktísta Petróvna knew that she could no longer strike her son now that he had begun to retaliate by biting, and that if she drove him into the street he would go off larking, and sooner get frost-bitten than go to the Svétchnikovs, therefore she appealed to her husband's authority.

"Calls himself a father, and can't protect the mother from insult!"

"Really, Sáshka, go. Why are you so obstinate?" he jerked out from the bench. "They will perhaps take you up again. They are kind people." Sáshka only laughed in an insulting manner.

His father, long ago, before Sáshka was born, had been tutor at the Svétchnikovs', and had ever since looked on them as the best people in the world. At that time he had held also an appointment in the statistical office of the Zemstvo, and had not yet taken to drink. Eventually he was compelled through his own fault to marry his landlady's daughter. From that time he severed his connection with the Svétchnikovs, and took to drink. Indeed, he let himself go to

such an extent, that he was several times picked up drunk in the streets and taken to the police station. But the Svétchnikovs did not cease to assist him with money, and Feoktísta Petróvna, although she hated them, together with books and everything connected with her husband's past, still valued their acquaintance, and was in the habit of boasting of it.

"Perhaps you might bring something for me too from the Christmas tree," continued his father. He was using craft to induce his son to go, and Sáshka knew it, and despised his father for his weakness and want of straightforwardness; though he really did wish to bring back something for the poor sickly old man, who had for a long time been without even good tobacco.

"All right!" he blurted out; "give me my jacket. Have you put the buttons on? No fear! I know you too well!"

II

THE children had not yet been admitted to the drawing-room, where the Christmas tree stood, but remained chattering in the nursery. Sáshka, with lofty superciliousness, stood listening to their naïve talk, and fingering the broken cigarettes in his breeches pocket, which he had managed to abstract from his host's study. At this moment there came up to him the youngest of the Svétchnikovs, Kolyá,* and stood motionless before him, a look of surprise on his face, his toes turned in, and a finger stuck in the corner of his pouting mouth. Six months ago, at the instance of his relatives, he had given up this bad habit of putting his finger in his mouth, but he could not quite break himself of it. He had blonde locks cut in a fringe on his forehead and falling in ringlets on his shoulders, and blue, wondering eyes: in fact he was just such a boy in appearance as Sáshka particularly loved to bully.

"Are 'oo weally a naughty boy?" he enquired of Sáshka. "Mees† said 'oo was. I'm a dood boy."

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* Short for Nikolâï. *Tr.*

† The English governess, whose influence may be traced in the "great turn-down collars." The tutor is often French, and the nurse German. At all events, the children in good families have generally the advantage of talking two or three languages besides Russian. *Tr.*

"That you are!" replied Sáshka, considering the other's short velvet trousers and great turn-down collars.

"Would 'oo like to have a dun? There!' and he pointed at him a little pop-gun with a cork tied to it. The Wolfkin took the gun, pressed down the spring, and aiming at the nose of the unsuspecting Kolyá, pulled the trigger. The cork struck his nose, and rebounding, hung by the string. Kolyá's blue eyes opened wider than ever, and filled with tears. Transferring his finger from his mouth to his reddening nose he blinked his long eyelashes and whispered:

"Bad—bad boy!"

A young lady of striking appearance, with her hair dressed in the simplest and the most becoming fashion, now entered the nursery. She was sister to the lady of the house, the very one indeed to whom Sáshka's father had formerly given lessons.

"Here's the boy," said she, pointing out Sáshka to the bald-headed man who accompanied her. "Bow, Sáshka, you should not be so rude!"

But Sáshka would bow neither to her, nor to her companion of the bald head. She little suspected how much he knew. But, as a fact, Sáshka did know that his miserable father loved her, and that she had married another; and, though this had taken place subsequent to his father's marriage, Sáshka could not bring himself to forgive what seemed to him like treachery.

"Takes after his father!" sighed Sófia Dmítriyevna. "Could not you, Plutóv Micháïl-

ovtich, do something for him ? My husband says that a commercial school would suit him better than the grammar school. Sáshka, would you like to go to a technical school ? "

" No ! " curtly replied Sáshka, who had caught the offensive word " husband."

" Would you be a shepherd* then ? " asked the gentleman

" Not likely ! " said Sáshka, in an offended tone.

" What then ? "

Now Sáshka did not know what he would like to be, but upon reflection replied : " Well, it's all the same to me, even a shepherd, if you like."

The bald-headed gentleman regarded the strange boy with a look of perplexity. When his eyes had travelled up from his patched boots to his face, Sáshka put out his tongue and quickly drew it back again, so that Sófia Dmítriyevna did not notice anything, but the old gentleman shewed an amount of irascibility that she could not understand.

" I should not mind going to a commercial school," bashfully suggested Sáshka.

The lady was overjoyed at Sáshka's decision, and meditated with a sigh on the beneficial influence exercised by an old love.

" I don't know whether there will be a vacancy," dryly remarked the old man avoiding looking at

* In Russia a shepherd is a servant of the peasant, and therefore the lowest of the low. The reader may remember, that Walter Raleigh wrote to the Earl of Leicester, " I would disdayn as mick to keap sheepe." *Tr.*

Sáshka, and smoothing down the ridge of hair which stuck up on the back of his head. "However, we shall see."

Meanwhile the children were becoming noisy, and in a great state of excitement were waiting impatiently for the Christmas tree.

The excellent practice with the pop-gun made in the hands of a boy, who commanded respect both for his stature and for his reputation for naughtiness, found imitators, and many a little button of a nose was made red. The tiny maids, holding their sides, bent almost double with laughter, as their little cavaliers with manly contempt of fear and pain, but all the same wrinkling up their faces in suspense, received the impact of the cork.

At length the doors were opened, and a voice said: "Come in, children; gently, not so fast!" Opening their little eyes wide, and holding their breath in anticipation, the children filed into the brightly illumined drawing-room in orderly pairs, and quietly walked round the glittering tree. It cast a strong, shadowless light on their eager faces, with rounded eyes and mouths. For a minute there reigned the silence of profound enchantment, which all at once broke out into a chorus of delighted exclamation. One of the little girls, unable to restrain her delight, kept dancing up and down in the same place, her little tress braided with blue ribbon beating meanwhile rythmically against her shoulders. Sáshka remained morose and gloomy—something evil was working in his little wounded

breast. The tree blinded him with its red, shriekingly insolent glitter of countless candles. It was foreign, hostile to him, even as the crowd of smart, pretty children* which surrounded it. He would have liked to give it a shove, and topple it over on their shining heads. It seemed as though some iron hand were gripping his heart, and wringing out of it every drop of blood. He crept behind the piano, and sat down there in a corner unconsciously crumpling to pieces in his pocket the last of the cigarettes, and thinking that though he had a father and mother and a home, it came to the same thing as if he had none, and nowhere to go to. He tried to recall to his imagination his little penknife, which he had acquired by a swap not long ago, and was very fond of; but his knife all at once seemed to him a very poor affair with its ground-down blade and only half of a yellow haft. To-morrow he would smash it up, and then he would have nothing left at all!

But suddenly Sáshka's narrow eyes gleamed with astonishment, and his face in a moment resumed its ordinary expression of audacity and self-confidence. On the side of the tree turned towards him—which was the back of it, and less brightly illumined than the other side—he discovered something such as had never come within the circle of his existence, and without which all his surroundings appeared as empty, as though

* It is the custom in Russia (as in some other countries) for the chief family in the village to invite children of all classes to the Christmas Tree. *Tr.*

peopled by persons without life. It was a little angel in wax carelessly hung in the thickest of the dark boughs, and looking as if it were floating in the air. His transparent dragon-fly wings trembled in the light, and he seemed altogether alive and ready to fly away. The rosy fingers of his exquisitely formed hands were stretched upwards, and from his head there floated just such locks as Kolya's. But there was something here, that was wanting in Kolya's face, and in all other faces and things. The face of the little angel did not shine with joy, nor was it clouded by grief; but there lay on it the impress of another feeling, not to be explained in words, nor defined by thought, but to be attained only by the sympathy of a kindred feeling. Sáshka was not conscious of the force of the mysterious influence which attracted him towards the little angel, but he felt that he had known him all his life, and had always loved him, loved him more than his penknife, more than his father, more than anything else. Filled with doubt, alarm, and a delight which he could not comprehend, Sáshka clasped his hands to his bosom and whispered:

"Dear—dear little angel!"

The more intently he looked the more fraught with significance the expression of the little angel's face became. He was so infinitely far off, so unlike everything which surrounded him there. The other toys seemed to take a pride in hanging there pretty, and decked out, upon the glittering tree, but he was pensive, and fearing the intrusive light

purposely hid himself in the dark greenery, so that none might see him. It would be a mad cruelty to touch his dainty little wings.

"Dear—dear!" whispered Sáshka.

His head became feverish. He clasped his hands behind his back, and in full readiness to fight to the death to win the little angel, he walked to and fro with cautious, stealthy steps. He avoided looking at the little angel, lest he should direct the attention of others towards him, but he felt that he was still there, and had not flown away.

Now the hostess appeared in the doorway, a tall, stately lady with a bright aureole of grey hair dressed high upon her head. The children trooped round her with expressions of delight, and the little girl—the same that had danced about in her place—hung wearily on her hand, blinking heavily with sleepy eyes.

As Sáshka approached her he seemed almost choking with emotion.

"Auntie—auntie!"* said he, trying to speak caressingly, but his voice sounded harsher than ever. "Auntie, dear!"

She did not hear him, so he tugged impatiently at her dress.

"What's the matter with you? Why are you pulling my dress?" said the grey-haired lady in surprise. "It's rude."

"Auntie—auntie, do give me one thing from the tree; give me the little angel."

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* This is, of course, only a child's way of addressing an elder. *Tr.*

"Impossible," replied the lady in a tone of indifference. "We are going to keep the tree decorated till the New Year. But you are no longer a child; you should call me by name —Mária Dmítriyevna."

Sáshka, feeling as if he were falling down a precipice, grasped the last means of saving himself.

"I am sorry I have been naughty. I'll be more industrious for the future," he blurted out. But this formula, which had always paid with his masters, made no impression upon the lady of the grey hair.

"A good thing, too, my friend," she said, as unconcernedly as before.

"Give me the little angel," demanded Sáshka, gruffly.

"But it's impossible. Can't you understand that?"

But Sáshka did not understand, and when the lady turned to go out of the room he followed her, his gaze fixed without conscious thought upon her black silk dress. In his surging brain there glimmered a recollection of how one of the boys in his class had asked the master to mark him 3,* and when the master refused he had knelt down before him, and putting his hands together as in prayer, had begun to cry. The master was angry, but gave him 3 all the same. At the time Sáshka had immortalised this episode in a caricature, but now his only means left was to follow the boy's example.

* In Russia 5 is the maximum mark. *Tr.*

Accordingly he plucked auntie again by the dress, and when she turned round, dropped with a bang on to his knees, and folded his hands as described above. But he could not squeeze out a single tear!

"Are you out of your mind?" exclaimed the grey-haired lady, casting a searching look round the room; but luckily no one was present.

"What is the matter with you?"

Kneeling there with clasped hands, Sáshka looked at her with dislike, and rudely repeated:

"Give me the little angel."

His eyes, fixed intently on the lady to catch the first word she should utter, were anything but good to look at, and the hostess answered hurriedly:

"Well, then, I'll give it to you. Ah! what a stupid you are! I will give you what you want, but why could you not wait till the New Year?"

"Stand up! And never," she added in a didactic tone, "never kneel to anyone: it is humiliating. Kneel before God alone."

"Talk away!" thought Sáshka, trying to get in front of her, and merely succeeding in treading on her dress.

When she had taken the toy from the tree, Sáshka devoured her with his eyes, but stretched out his hands for it with a painful pucker of the nose. It seemed to him that the tall lady would break the little angel.

"Beautiful thing!" said the lady, who was sorry to part with such a dainty and presumably expensive toy. "Who can have hung it there?

Well, what do you want with such a thing? Are you not too big to know what to do with it? Look, there are some picture-books. But this I promised to give to Kolya; he begged so earnestly for it." But this was not the truth.

Sáshka's agony became unbearable. He clenched his teeth convulsively, and seemed almost to grind them. The lady of the grey hair feared nothing so much as a scene, so she slowly held out the little angel to Sáshka.

"There now, take it!" she said in a displeased tone; "what a persistent fellow you are!"

Sáshka's hands as they seized the little angel seemed like tentacles, and were tense as steel springs, but withal so soft and careful, that the little angel might have imagined himself to be flying in the air.

"A-h-h!" escaped in a long *diminuente* sigh from Sáshka's breast, while in his eyes glistened two little tear-drops, which stood still there as though unused to the light. Slowly drawing the little angel to his bosom, he kept his shining eyes on the hostess, with a quiet, tender smile which died away in a feeling of unearthly bliss. It seemed, when the dainty wings of the little angel touched Sáshka's sunken breast, as if he experienced something so blissful, so bright, the like of which had never before taken place in this sorrowful, sinful, suffering world.

"A-h-h!" sighed he once more as the little angel's wings touched him. And at the shining of his face the absurdly decorated and insolently

glowing tree seemed to be extinguished, and the grey-haired portly dame smiled with gladness, and the parchment-like face of the bald-headed gentleman twitched, and the children fell into a vivid silence as though touched by a breath of human happiness.

For one short moment all observed a mysterious likeness between the awkward boy, who had outgrown his clothes, and the lineaments of the little angel, which had been spiritualised by the hand of an unknown artist.

But the next moment the picture was entirely changed. Crouching like a panther preparing to spring, Sáshka surveyed the surrounding company, on the look-out for someone who should dare wrest his little angel from him.

" I'm going home," he said in a dull voice, having in view a way of escape through the crowd, " home to father."

III

His mother was asleep worn out with a whole day's work and *vodka*-drinking. In the little room behind the partition there stood a small cooking-lamp burning on the table. Its feeble yellow light, with difficulty penetrating the sooty glass, threw a strange shadow over the faces of Sáshka and his father.

"Is it not pretty?" asked Sáshka in a whisper, holding the little angel at a distance from his father, so as not to allow him to touch it.

"Yes, there's something most remarkable about him," whispered the father, gazing thoughtfully at the toy. And his face expressed the same concentrated attention and delight, as did Sáshka's.

"Look, he is going to fly."

"I see it too," replied Sáshka in an ecstasy. "Think I'm blind? But look at his little wings! Ah! don't touch!"

The father withdrew his hand, and with troubled eyes studied the details of the little angel, while Sáshka whispered with the air of a pedagogue:

"Father, what a bad habit you have of touching everything! You might break it."

There fell upon the wall the shadows of two grotesque, motionless heads bending towards one another, one big and shaggy, the other small and round.

Within the big head strange torturing thoughts, though at the same time full of delight, were seething. His eyes unblinkingly regarded the little angel, and under his steadfast gaze it seemed to grow larger and brighter, and its wings to tremble with a noiseless trepidation, and all the surroundings—the timber-built, soot-stained wall, the dirty table, Sáshka—everything became fused into one level grey mass without light or shade. It seemed to the broken man that he heard a pitying voice from the world of wonders, wherein once he had dwelt, and whence he had been cast out for ever. There they knew nothing of dirt, of weary quarrelling, of the blindly-cruel strife of egotism, there they knew nothing of the tortures of a man arrested in the streets with callous laughter, and beaten by the rough hand of the night-watchman. There everything is pure, joyful, bright. And all this purity found an asylum in the soul of her whom he loved more than life, and had lost—when he had kept his hold upon his own useless life. With the smell of wax, which emanated from the toy, was mingled a subtle aroma, and it seemed to the broken man, that her dear fingers touched the angel, those fingers which he would fain have caressed in one long kiss, till death should close his lips for ever. This was why the little toy was so beautiful, this was why there was in it something specially attractive, which defied description. The little angel had descended from that heaven, which her soul was to him, and had brought a ray of light

into the damp room, steeped in sulphurous fumes, and to the dark soul of the man, from whom had been taken all: love, and happiness, and life.

On a level with the eyes of the man, who had lived his life, sparkled the eyes of the boy, who was beginning his life, and embraced the little angel in their caress. For them present and future had disappeared: the ever-sorrowful, piteous father, the rough, unendurable mother, the black darkness of insults, of cruelty, of humiliations, and of spiteful grief. The thoughts of Sáshka were formless, nebulous, but all the more deeply for that did they move his agitated soul. Everything that is good and bright in the world, all profound grief, and the hope of a soul that sighs for God, the little angel absorbed them all into himself, and that was why he glowed with such a soft divine radiance, that was why his little dragon-fly wings trembled with a noiseless trepidation.

The father and son did not look at one another: their sick hearts grieved, wept, and rejoiced apart. But there was a something in their thoughts, which fused their hearts in one, and annihilated that bottomless abyss, which separates man from man, and makes him so lonely, unhappy, and weak. The father with an unconscious motion put his arm round the neck of his son, and the son's head rested equally without conscious volition upon his father's consumptive chest.

"*She* it was who gave it to thee, was it not?" whispered the father, without taking his eyes off the little angel.

At another time Sáshka would have replied with a rude negation, but now the only reply possible resounded of itself within his soul, and he calmly pronounced the pious fraud: "Who else? of course she did."

The father made no reply, and Sáshka relapsed into silence.

Something grated in the adjoining room, then clicked, and then was silent for a moment, and then noisily and hurriedly the clock struck "One, two, three."

"Sáshka, do you ever dream?" asked the father in a meditative tone.

"No! Oh, yes," he admitted, "once I had one, in which I fell down from the roof. We were climbing after the pigeons, and I fell down."

"But I dream always. Strange things are dreams. One sees the whole past, one loves and suffers as though it were reality."

Again he was silent, and Sáshka felt his arm tremble as it lay upon his neck. The trembling and pressure of his father's arm became stronger and stronger, and the sensitive silence of the night was all at once broken by the pitiful sobbing sound of suppressed weeping. Sáshka sternly puckered his brow, and cautiously—so as not to disturb the heavy trembling arm—wiped away a tear from his eyes. So strange was it to see a big old man crying.

"Ah! Sáshka, Sáshka," sobbed the father, "what is the meaning of everything?"

" Why, what's the matter ? " sternly whispered Sáshka. " You're crying just like a little boy."

" Well, I won't, then," said the father with a piteous smile of excuse. " What's the good ? "

Feoktísta Petróvna turned on her bed. She sighed, cleared her throat, and mumbled in a loud and strangely persistent manner some incoherent sounds.

It was time to go to bed. But before doing so the little angel must be disposed of for the night. He could not be left on the floor, so he was hung up by his string, which was fastened to the flue of the stove. There it stood out accurately delineated against the white Dutch-tiles. And so they could both see him, Sáshka and his father.

Hurriedly throwing into a corner the various rags on which he was in the habit of sleeping, Sáshka lay down on his back, in order as quickly as possible to look again at the little angel.

" Why don't you undress ? " asked his father as he shivered and wrapped himself up in his tattered blanket, and arranged his clothes, which he had thrown over his feet.

" What's the good ? I shall soon be up again."

Sáshka wished to add that he did not care to go to sleep at all, but he had no time to do so, since he fell to sleep as suddenly as though he had sunk to the bottom of a deep swift river.

His father presently fell asleep also And gentle sleep, and restfulness lay upon the weary face of the man, who had lived his life, and upon the brave face of the little man, who was just beginning his life.

But the little angel hanging by the hot stove began to melt. The lamp, which had been left burning at the entreaty of Sáshka, filled the room with the smell of kerosene, and through its smoked glass threw a melancholy light upon a scene of gradual dissolution. The little angel seemed to stir. Over his rosy fingers there rolled thick drops which fell upon the bench. To the smell of kerosene was added the stifling scent of melting wax. The little angel gave a tremble as though on the point of flight, and—fell with a soft thud upon the hot flags.

An inquisitive cockroach singed its wings as it ran round the formless lump of melted wax, climbed up the dragon-fly wings, and twitching its feelers went on its way.

Through the curtained window the grey-blue light of coming day crept in, and the frozen water-carrier was already making a noise in the courtyard with his iron scoop.

AT THE ROAD-SIDE STATION

It was early spring when I went to the bungalow. On the road still lay last year's darkened leaves. I was unaccompanied; and alone I wandered through the still empty bungalows, the windows of which reflected the April sun. I mounted the broad bright terraces, and wondered who would live here under the green canopy of birch and oak. And when I closed my eyes, I seemed to hear quick, cheerful footsteps, youthful song, and the ringing sound of women's laughter.

I used often to go to the station to meet the passenger trains. I was not expecting anyone: there was no one to come and see me; but I am fond of those iron giants, when they rush past, rolling their shoulders, tearing along the rails with colossal momentum, and carrying somewhither persons unknown to me, but still my fellow creatures. They seem to me alive and uncanny. In their speed I recognise the immensity of the world and the might of man, and when they whistle with such abandon and in so imperious a manner, I think how they are whistling in the same way in America, and Asia, may be in torrid Africa.

The station was a small one, with two short sidings, and when the passenger train had left, it became still and deserted. The forest and the

streaming sunshine dominated the little low platform, and the desolate track, and blended the rails in silence and light. On one of the sidings under an empty sleeping-car fowls wandered about, swarming round the iron wheels, and one could hardly believe, as one watched their peaceful, fussy activity, that it would be much the same in America, in Asia, or in torrid Africa. . . . In a week I became acquainted with all the inhabitants of this little corner, and saluted as acquaintances the watchmen in their blue blouses, and the silent pointsmen with their dull countenances, and their brass horns, which glittered in the sun.

Every day I saw at the station a gendarme. He was a healthy, strong fellow, as are they all, with broad back, in a tightly stretched blue uniform, with enormous arms and a youthful countenance, upon which, from behind a severe official dignity, there still looked out the blue-eyed naïveté of the country. At first he used to scan me all over with a gloomy suspicion, and put on a look of unapproachable severity without a touch of indulgence, and when he passed me would clank his spurs in a peculiarly sharp and eloquent manner. But he soon became used to me, just as he had become used to the pillars which supported the roof of the platform, to the desolate track, and to the discarded sleeping-car under which the fowls kept running about. In such quiet corners a habit is soon formed. And when he left off observing me, I perceived that this man was bored—bored as no one else in the world.

He was bored with the wearisome station, bored by the absence of thoughts, bored by his strength-devouring inactivity, bored by the exclusiveness of his position, somewhere in the void between the station-master, who was unapproachable to him, and the lower employés to whom he was himself unapproachable. His soul lived on breaches of the peace, but at this tiny station no one ever committed a breach of the peace, and every time the passenger train departed without any adventure there passed over the face of the gendarme the expression of annoyance and vexation of a person who has been deprived of his due. For some minutes he would stand still in indecision, and then with listless gait walk to the other end of the platform without any aim or object. On his way he might stop for a second in front of some peasant woman who had been waiting for the train—but she was only a peasant woman like any other—and so knitting his brows the gendarme would pass on his way.

Then he would sit down stout and listless, as though he had been boiled soft, and felt how soft and flabby were his useless arms under the cloth of his uniform, and how his powerful body, created for work, grew weary with the torturing fatigue of doing nothing. We are bored only in head, but he was bored in every part of him, from head to foot: his cap, cocked on one side with youthful lack of purpose, was bored, his spurs were bored and tinkled inharmoniously and irregularly as though muffled. Then he began to yawn. How

he yawned! his mouth became contorted, expanded from ear to ear, grew broader and broader, till it swallowed up his whole face, it seemed that in another second, through the ever enlarging aperture, you would be able to survey his very inside, choke-full of crowdy and greasy soup. How he yawned! He went away in a hurry, but for long that awful yawn seemed to put my jaw-bone out of joint, and the trees were broken and bobbing about to my tear-filled eyes.

Once from the mail train they took a passenger travelling without a ticket, and this was a very festival for the bored gendarme. He drew himself up, his spurs jingled with precision and austerity, his face became concentrated and angry; but his happiness was but short-lived. The passenger paid his fare, and with a hasty oath got back into thecar, and in the rear the metal rowels of the gendarme's spurs gave a disconcerted and piteous rattle, as his enervated body swayed feebly over them.

And at times when he yawned he became to me something terrible.

For some days workmen had been busy about the station clearing the site, and when I returned from town after a stay of a couple of days, the masons were laying the third row of bricks; a brand-new building was arising. These masons were numerous and worked quickly, and skilfully; and it was a strange pleasure to watch the straight, even wall springing up out of the ground. When they had covered one row with mortar they laid on a second row, adjusting the bricks according to

their dimensions, laying them now on the broad side, now on the narrow, and cutting off the corners to make them fit. They worked meditatively, and though the course of their meditation was evident enough, and their problem clear, still it gave an additional charm and interest to the work. I was looking at them with enjoyment when an authoritative voice at my elbow shouted :

" Look here, you, What's your name ! Why don't you put this right ? "

It was the voice of the gendarme, squeezing himself through the iron railings, which separated the asphalt platform from the workmen ; he was pointing to a certain brick and insisting : " You with the beard ! lay that brick properly. Don't you see, it's a half-brick ? "

The mason with the beard, which was in places whitened with lime, turned round in silence—the gendarme's face was severe and imposing—in silence he followed the direction of the gendarme's finger, took up the brick, trimmed it, and in silence put it back in its place. The gendarme gave me a severe look and went away ; but the seductive interest in the work was stronger than his sense of dignity. When he had made a couple of turns on the platform, he again came to a standstill in front of the workmen adopting a somewhat careless and contemptuous pose. But his face no longer showed signs of boredom.

I went to the wood, and when I was returning through the station it was one o'clock, the workmen were resting, and the place was empty as

usual. But someone was busying himself about the unfinished wall; it was the gendarme. He was taking up bricks, and finishing the fifth row. I could only catch a sight of his broad, tightly stretched back, but it was expressive of intent thought, and indecision. Evidently the work was more complicated than he had imagined. His unaccustomed eye was playing him false; he stepped back, shook his head, stooped for a fresh brick, striking the ground with his sabre as he bent down. Once he raised his finger, in the classic jesture of one who has discovered the solution of a problem, such as might have been used by Archimedes himself, and his back once more assumed the erect attitude of greater self-confidence and certainty. But immediately it became once more doubled up in the consciousness of the undignified nature of the work undertaken. There was in his whole, full-grown figure something secretive as with children, when they are afraid they will be found out.

I carelessly struck a match to light a cigarette, and the gendarme turned round startled. For a moment he looked at me in confusion, and suddenly his youthful countenance was illumined by a slightly solicitous, confiding, and kindly smile. But the very next moment he resumed his austere, unapproachable look, and his hand went up to his little thin moustache—but in it, in that very hand, there still lay that unlucky brick! And I saw how painfully ashamed he was of that brick, and of his involuntary, compromising smile. Appar-

ently he did not know how to blush, otherwise he would have become as red as the brick which he still held helplessly in his hand.

They had carried the wall up half way, and it was no longer possible to see what the skilful masons were doing on their scaffolding. Once more the gendarme oscillated from end to end of the platform, yawning, and when he turned round and passed me I could feel that he was ashamed —and that he hated me. And as I looked at his powerful arms listlessly swinging in their sleeves, at his inharmoniously jingling spurs, and trailing sabre, it seemed to me that it was all unreal—that in the scabbard there was no sabre at all, with which he might cut a man down, in the case no revolver, with which he might shoot a man dead. And his very uniform, that too was unreal, and seemed as though it was all just some strange masquerade taking place in full daylight, in the face of the honest April sun, and amidst ordinary working people, and busy fowls picking up grains under the sleeping-car.

But at times—at times I began to fear for some one. He was so terribly bored. . . .

SNAPPER

I

He belonged to no one, he had no name of his own, and none could say where he spent the long, frosty winter, or how he was fed. The house-dogs hungry as himself, but proud and strong from the consciousness of belonging to a house, would chase him away from the warm cottages. When driven by hunger or an instinctive need of company, he showed himself in the street, the boys pelted him with stones and sticks, while the grow-ups gave a merry whoop, or a terribly piercing whistle. Distraught with fear he would dart about from side to side, and stumbling against the fences and people's legs, would run as fast as he could to the end of the village, and hide himself in the depths of a large garden in a place known only to himself. There he would lick his bruises and wounds, and in solitude heap up terror and malice.

Once only had he been pitied and petted. This was by a peasant, a drunkard, who was returning from the public house. Just then he loved all things, and pitied all, and said something in his beard about kind people, and the trust he himself put in kind people. He pitied even the dirty, unlovely dog, on which by chance his drunken, aimless glance had fallen.

" Doggie," said he, calling it by a name common to all dogs ; " Doggie, come here, don't be afraid."

Doggie wanted very much to come. He wagged his tail, but could not make up his mind. The peasant patted his knee with his hand, and repeated reassuringly :

" Come along, then, silly. I swear I won't hurt you."

But while the dog was hesitating, wagging its tail more and more energetically, and advancing with short steps, the humour of the drunkard changed. He recalled all the insults that had been heaped on him by kind people, and felt angry, and dully malicious, so that when Doggie lay on his back before him, he gave him a vicious kick in the side with the toe of his heavy boot.

" Garn ! Dirty ! Where are you coming to ! "

The dog began to whimper, more from surprise and the insult, than from pain, and the peasant staggered home, where he gave his wife a savage beating, and tore to pieces a new kerchief which he had bought for her as a present the week before.

From this time forth the dog ceased to trust people who wished to pet it, and either put its tail between its legs and ran away, or sometimes would fly at them angrily and try to bite them, until they succeeded in driving it away with stones or a stick. For one winter he had taken up his abode under the verandah of an unoccupied bungalow, which was without a caretaker, and took care of it for nothing. By nights he ran about the streets and barked till he was hoarse, and

long after he had lain himself down in his place, he would keep up an angry growl, but beneath the anger there was apparent a certain amount of content, and even pride, in himself.

The winter nights dragged themselves out slowly, and the black windows of the empty bungalow gazed grimly on the motionless icy, garden. Sometimes blue lights seemed to kindle in them, at others a falling star would be reflected in the panes, or again the sharp-horned moon would throw on them its timid ray.

II

Spring came on, and the quiet bungalow was all a-voice with loud talk, the creaking of wheels, and the stamping of people moving heavy things. The owners had arrived from the city, a whole merry troop of grown-up people, of half-grown-ups and children, all intoxicated with the air, the warmth and the light. Some shouted, some sang, and some laughed with shrill female voices.

The first with whom the dog made acquaintance was a pretty girl, who ran out into the garden in a formal, cinnamon-coloured dress.* Greedily and impatiently desiring to seize and hug in her embrace everything visible, she looked at the clear sky, at the reddish cherry twigs, and lay quickly down on the grass, with her face towards the burning sun. Then she got up again as suddenly, and hugging herself, and kissing the Spring air with her fresh lips, said expressively and seriously:

"Well, this *is* jolly!"

She spoke, and then suddenly turned round. At this very moment the dog noiselessly approached, and furiously seized the extended skirt of her dress in its teeth and tore it, and then as noiselessly disappeared into the thick gooseberry and currant bushes.

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* Such as is worn by school girls and girl students. *Tr.*

"Oh! bad dog!" cried the girl, running away, and for long might be heard her agitated voice: "Mamma! children! don't go into the garden. There is a dog there, such a great, big, fierce one!"

At night the dog crept up to the sleeping bungalow, and noiselessly lay down in its place under the verandah. It smelt of people, and through the open windows was borne the soft sound of gentle breathing. The people were asleep, they were powerless and no longer terrible, and the dog jealously guarded them. He slept with one eye open, and at every rustle stretched out his head with its two motionless phosphorescent eyes. But the alarming noises were so many in the sensitive Spring night: in the grass something small and unseen rustled, and came quite close to the shiny nose of the dog; last year's twigs crackled under the feet of sleeping birds, and on the neighbouring road a cart rumbled, and heavily-laden wains creaked. And afar off round about in the motionless air was diffused the sweet, fresh scent of resin, and lured one into the lightening distance.

The owners, who had arrived at the bungalow, were very kind people, and all the more so now that they were far from the city, breathing pure air, seeing around them everything green, and blue, and harmless. The sunlight went into them in warmth, and came out again in laughter, and goodwill towards all things living. At first they wished to drive away the dog, of which they were afraid, and even shot at it with a revolver, when

it would not take itself off; but later they became accustomed to its barking at night, and even sometimes remembered it in the morning:

"But where's our Snapper?"

And this new name "Snapper" stuck to it. Sometimes even by day they would notice among the bushes its dark body, which would fall flat on the ground at the first motion of a hand throwing bread—as though it were a stone, not bread,—and soon all became accustomed to Snapper, and called him "our dog," and joked about the cause of his shyness and unreasonable fear. Each day Snapper diminished by one step the distance which separated him from the people: he grew accustomed to their faces, and adopted their habits. Half an hour before dinner he would be already standing in the shrubs, and blinking with a conciliatory air. And that same little school-girl it was, who, forgetting the former outrage, brought the dog definitely into the happy circle of cheerful, restful people.

"Snapper, come here," said she, calling him. "Good dog, come here. Do you like sugar? I'll give you a lump. Come along, then."

But Snapper would not come; he was afraid. Then cautiously patting her knee, and speaking with all the caressing kindness of a beautiful voice, and a pretty face, Lélya approached the dog, but was in her turn afraid: suddenly he snapped.

"I am so fond of you, Snapper, dear; you have such a nice little nose, and such expressive eyes. Won't you trust me, Snapperkin?"

Lélya raised her eyebrows, and her own little nose was so pretty and her eyes so expressive, that the sun acted wisely in covering all her little youthful, naïvely charming face with hot kisses, till her cheeks were red.

Snapper for the second time in his life turned on his back and closed his eyes, not knowing for a certainty whether he was to be kicked or petted. But he was petted. Small warm hands touched irresolutely his woolly head, and as though this were a sign of undeniable authority, began freely and boldly to run over the whole of his hairy body, rumpling, and petting, and tickling.

"Mamma! children! look here, I'm petting Snapper," cried Lélya.

When the children ran up, noisy, loud-voiced, quick and bright as drops of uncontrollable mercury, Snapper cowed down in fear, and helpless expectancy: he knew that if anyone struck him now, he would no longer be in a position to fix his sharp teeth in the body of the offender; his unappeasable malice had been taken from him. And when they all began to vie in caressing him, he for a long time could not help trembling at each touch of the caressing hand, and the unwonted fondling hurt him as though it had been a blow.

III

All Snapper's doggy nature expanded. He had now a name, at the sound of which he rushed headlong from the green depths of the garden: he belonged to people, and could serve them. What more did a dog need to make him happy!

Being accustomed to the moderation induced by years of a vagrant, hungry life, he ate but little, but that little changed him out of recognition. His long coat, which formerly had hung in foxy dry tufts on his back and on his belly, which had been covered eternally with dried mud, now became clean, and grew black, and became as glossy as velvet. And when he, having nothing better to do, would run to the gates and stand on the threshold, looking up and down the street with a dignified air, no one ever took it into his head to tease him, or throw stones at him.

But such pride and independence he could enjoy only to himself. Fear had not as yet been wholly evaporated from his heart by the fire of caresses, and so every time people appeared, or approached him, he hid himself expecting a beating. And still for a long time every caress came to him as a surprise, and a wonder, which he could neither understand, nor respond to. He did not know how to receive caresses. Other dogs could stand and walk about on their hind legs, and even smile, and thus express their feelings, but he did not know how.

The one only thing that Snapper was able to do was to roll on his back, shut his eyes, and whimper gently. But this was insufficient, it could not express his delight, and thankfulness, and love. By a sudden inspiration, however, Snapper began to do something, which may-be he had seen done by other dogs, but had long since forgotten. He turned absurd somersaults, leapt awkwardly, and ran after his tail; and his body, which had been always so supple and active, became stiff, ridiculous, and pitiful.

"Mamma! children! look, Snapper is performing," cried Lélya, and choking with laughter, said: "Once more, Snapper, once more. That's right!"

And they gathered together and laughed, and Snapper kept on twisting round, and turning somersaults and falling, and no one saw the strange entreating look in his eyes. And as formerly they used to howl and shout at the dog to see his despairing fear, so now they caressed him on purpose to excite in him an ebullition of love, so infinitely laughable in its awkward, absurd manifestations. Hardly an hour passed but someone of the half-grown-ups or the children would cry:

"Now then, Snapper dear, perform!"

And Snapper would twist about, turn somersaults, and fall, amid merry, irrepressible laughter. They praised him to his face and behind his back, and lamented only one thing, viz., that he would not show off his tricks before strangers, who came to visit, but would run away into the garden, or hide himself under the verandah.

Gradually Snapper became accustomed to not being obliged to trouble himself about his food, since at the appointed hour the cook would give him scraps and bones, while he confidently and quietly lay in his place under the verandah, and even sought and asked for caresses. And he grew heavy: he seldom ran away from the bungalow, and when the little children called him to go with them to the forest, he would wag an evasive tail, and disappear unseen. But all the same at night his bark would be loud and wakeful as ever.

IV

Autumn began to glow with yellow fires, and the sky to weep with heavy rain, and the bungalows became quickly empty, and silent, as though the incessant rain and wind had extinguished them one by one, like candles.

"What are we to do with Snapper?" asked Lélya, with hesitation. She was sitting embracing her knees and looking sorrowfully out of the window, down which were rolling glistening drops of rain.

"What a position you're in, Lélya; that's not the way to sit!" said her mother, and added: "Snapper must be left behind, poor fellow."

"That's—a—pity," said Lélya lingeringly.

"But what can one do? We have no court-yard at home, and we can't keep him in the house, that you must very well understand."

"It's—a—pity," repeated Lélya, ready to cry, Her dark brows were raised, like a swallow's wings, and her pretty little nose puckered piteously, when her mother said:

"The Dogáyevs offered me a puppy some time ago, They say that it is very well bred, and ready trained. Do you see? But this is only a yard-dog."

"A—pity," repeated Lélya, but she did not cry.

Once more strangers arrived, and wagons creaked, and the floors groaned beneath heavy footsteps, but there was less talk, and no laughter was heard

at all. Terrified by the strange people, and dimly prescient of calamity, Snapper fled to the extreme end of the garden, and thence through the thinning bushes gazed unceasingly at that corner of the verandah which was open to his view, and at the figures in red shirts which were moving about on it.

"You there! my poor Snapper," said Lélya as she came out. She was already dressed for the journey in the same cinnamon skirt, out of which Snapper had torn a piece, and a black jacket. "Come along!"

And they went out into the road. The rain kept coming and going, and the whole expanse between the blackened earth, and the sky, was full of clubbed, swiftly-moving clouds. From below it could be seen how heavy they were, and impenetrable to the light on account of the water which saturated them, and how weary the sun must be behind that solid wall.

To the left of the road stretched the darkened stubble field, and only on the near hummocky horizon short uneven trees, and shrubs appeared in lonesome patches. In front, not far off, was the barrier, and near it a wine-shop with red iron roof, and by it was a group of people teasing the village idiot Ilyúsha.

"Give us a happeny," snuffled the idiot in a drawling voice, and evil, jeering voices replied all together:

"Will you chop up some wood?"

Ilyúsha reviled foully and cynically, and the others laughed without mirth. A sun-ray broke through, yellow and anæmic, as though the sun were hopelessly sick; and the foggy Autumn distance became wider, and more melancholy;

"I'm sorry, Snapper!" Lelya gently let fall the words, and went back without looking round. It was not till she reached the station that she remembered that she had not said good-bye to Snapper.

SNAPPER long followed the track of the people as they went away, he ran as far as the station, and wet through and muddy, returned to the bungalow. There he performed one more new trick, which no one, however, was there to see. For the first time he went on to the verandah, stood on his hind legs, looked in at the glass door, and even scratched at it. But the rooms were all empty, and no one answered him.

A violent rain poured down, and on all sides the darkness of the long Autumn night began to close in. Quickly and dully it filled the empty bungalow: noiselessly it crept out from the shrubs, and in company with the rain, poured down from the uninviting sky. On the verandah, from which the awning had been taken away, and which for that reason looked like a broad and unknown waste, the light had long been in conflict with the darkness, and mournfully illumined the marks of dirty feet; but soon it gave in.

Night had come on.

When there was no longer any doubt that the night was upon him, the dog began to howl in loud complaint. With a note resonant, and sharp as despair, that howl broke into the monotonous, sullenly persistent sound of the rain, rending the darkness, and then dying down was carried over the dark naked fields.

The dog howled—regularly, persistently, desperately, soberly—and to anyone who heard that howling it seemed as though the impenetrable dark night itself were groaning and longing for the light, and he would wish himself in the warmth by the bright fire, and the loving heart of his wife.

The dog howled.

THE LIE

"You lie! I know you lie!"

"What are you shouting for? Is it necessary that everyone should hear us?"

And here again she lied, for I had not shouted, but spoken in the quietest voice, holding her hand and speaking quite gently while that venomous word "lie" hissed* like a little serpent.

"I love you," she continued, "and you ought to believe me. Does not this convince you?"

And she kissed me. But when I was about to take hold of her hand and press it—she was already gone. She left the semi-dark corridor, and I followed her once more to the place where a gay party was just coming to an end. How did I know where it was? She had told me that I might go there, and I went there and watched the dancing all the night through. No one came near me, or spoke to me, I was a stranger to all, and sat in the corner near the band. Pointed straight at me was the mouth of a great brass instrument, through which someone hidden in the depths of it kept bellowing, and every minute or so would give a rude staccato laugh: "Ho! ho! ho!"

From time to time a scented white cloud would

* *Lojh* is a hissing word, terser and more expressive than the periphrasis "a terminological inexactitude." *Tr.*

come close to me. It was she. I knew not how she managed to caress me without being observed, but for one short little second her shoulder would press mine, and for one short little second I would lower my eyes and see a white neck in the opening of a white dress. And when I raised my eyes I saw a profile as white, severe, and truthful as that of a pensive angel on the tomb of the long-forgotten dead. And I saw her eyes. They were large, greedy of the light, beautiful, and calm. From their blue-white setting the pupils shone black, and the more I looked at them the blacker they seemed, and the more unfathomable their depths. May-be I looked at them for so short a time that my heart failed to make the slightest impression, but certainly never did I understand so profoundly and terribly the meaning of Infinity, nor ever realised it with such force. I felt in fear and pain that my very life was passing out in a slender ray into her eyes, until I became a stranger to myself—desolated, speechless, almost dead. Then she would leave me, taking my life with her, and dance again with a certain tall, haughty, but handsome partner of hers. I studied his every characteristic—the shape of his shoes, and width of his rather high shoulders, the rythmic sway of one of his locks, which separated itself from the rest, while with his indifferent, unseeing glance he, as it were, crushed me against the wall, and I felt myself as flat and lifeless to look at as the wall itself.

When they began to extinguish the lights, I went up to her and said :

"It is time to go. I will accompany you."

But she expressed surprise.

"But certainly I am going with him," and she pointed to the tall, handsome man, who was not looking at us. She led me out into an empty room and kissed me.

"You lie," I said very softly.

"We shall meet again to-morrow. You must come," was her answer.

When I drove home, the green frosty dawn was looking out from behind the high roofs. In the whole street there were only we two, the sledge-driver and I. He sat with bent head and wrapped-up face, and I sat behind him wrapped up to the very eyes. The sledge-driver had his thoughts, and I had mine, and there behind the thick walls thousands of people were sleeping, and they had their own dreams and thoughts. I thought of her, and of how she lied. I thought of death, and it seemed to me that those dimly-lightened walls had already looked upon my death, and that was why they were so cold and upright. I know not what the thoughts of the sledge-driver may have been, neither do I know of what those hidden by the walls were dreaming. But then, neither did they know my thoughts and reveries.

And so we drove on through the long and straight streets, and the dawn rose from behind the roofs, and all around was motionless and white. A cold, scented cloud came close to me, and straight into my ear someone unseen laughed:

"Ho! ho! ho!"

II

She had lied. She did not come, and I waited for her in vain. The grey, uniform, frozen, semi-darkness descended from the lightless sky, and I was not conscious of when the twilight passed into evening, and when the evening passed into night—to me it was all one long night. I kept walking backwards and forwards with the same even, measured steps of hope deferred. I did not come close up to the tall house, where my beloved dwelt, nor to its glazed door which shone yellow at the end of the iron covered-way, but I walked on the opposite side of the street with the same measured strides—backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. In going forward I did not take my eye off the glazed door, and when I turned back I stopped frequently and turned my head round, and then the snow pricked my face with its sharp needles. And so long were those sharp cold needles that they pentrated to my very heart, and pierced it with grief and anger at my useless waiting. The cold wind blew uninterruptedly from the bright north to the dark south, and whistled playfully on the icy roofs, and rebounding cut my face with sharp little snowflakes, and softly tapped the glasses of the empty lanterns, in which the lonely yellow flame, shivering with cold, bent to the draught. And I felt sorry for the lonely flame which lived only by night, and I thought to myself,

when I go away all life will end in this street, and only the snowflakes will fly through the empty space; but still the yellow flame will continue to shiver and bend in loneliness and cold.

I waited for her, but she came not. And it seemed to me that the lonely flame and I were like one another, only that my lamp was not empty, for in that void, which I kept measuring with my strides, there did sometimes appear people. They grew up unheard behind my back, big and dark, they passed me, and like ghosts suddenly disappeared round the corner of the white building. Then again they would come out from round the corner, come up along-side of me and then gradually melt away in the great distance, obscured by the silently falling snow. Muffled up, formless, silent, they were so like to one another and to myself that it seemed as if scores of people were walking backwards and forwards and waiting, as I was, shivering and silent, and were thinking their own enigmatic sad thoughts.

I waited for her, but she came not. I know not why I did not cry out and weep for pain. I know not why I laughed and was glad, and crooked my fingers like claws, as though I held in them that little venomous thing which kept hissing like a snake: a lie! It wriggled in my hands, and bit my heart, and my head reeled with its poison. Everything was a lie! The boundary line between the future and present, present and past, vanished. The boundary line between the time when I did not yet exist, and the time when I began to be,

vanished, and I thought that I must have always been alive, or else never have lived at all. And always, before I lived and when I began to live, she had ruled over me, and I felt it strange that she should have a name, and a body, and that her existence should have a beginning and an end. She had no name, she was always the one that lies, that makes eternally to wait, and never comes. And I knew not why, but I laughed, and the sharp needles pierced my heart, and right in my ear someone unseen laughed:

"Ho! ho! ho!"

Opening my eyes I looked at the lighted windows of the lofty house, and they quietly said to me in their blue and red language:

"Thou art deceived by her. At this very moment whilst thou art wandering, waiting, and suffering, she all bright, lovely, and treacherous, is there, and listening to the whispers of that tall, handsome man, who despises thee. If thou wert to break in there and kill her, thou wouldst be doing a good deed, for that wouldst slay a lie."

I gripped the knife, I held in my hand, tighter, and answered laughingly: "Yes, I will kill her."

But the windows gazed at me mournfully, and added sadly: "Thou wilt never kill her. Never! because the weapon thou holdest in thy hand is as much a lie as are her kisses."

The silent shadows of my fellow-watchers had disappeared long ago, and I was left alone in the cold void, I—and the lonely tongues of fire shivering with cold and despair. The clock in the neighbour-

ing church-tower began to strike, and its dismal metallic sound trembled and wept, flying away into the void, and being lost in the maze of silently whirling snowflakes. I began to count the strokes, and went into a fit of laughter. The clock struck 15 ! The belfry was old, and so, too, was the clock, and although it indicated the right time, it struck spasmodically, sometimes so often that the grey, ancient bell-ringer had to clamber up and stop the convulsive strokes of the hammer with his hand. For whom did those senilely tremulous, melancholy sounds, which were embraced and throttled by the frosty darkness, tell a lie ? So pitiable and inept was that useless lie.

With the last lying sounds of the clock the glazed door slammed, and a tall man made his way down the steps.

I saw only his back, but I recognized it as I had seen it only last evening, proud and contemptuous. I recognized his walk, and it was lighter and more confident than in the evening : thus had I often left that door. He walked, as those do, whom the lying lips of a woman have just kissed.

III

I threatened and entreated, grinding my teeth :

" Tell me the truth ! "

But with a face cold as snow, while from beneath her brows, lifted in surprise, her dark, inscrutable eyes shone passionless and mysterious as ever, she assured me :

" But I am not lying to you."

She knew that I could not prove her lie, and that all my heavy massive structure of torturing thought would crumble at one word from her, even one lying word. I waited for it—and it came forth from her lips, sparkling on the surface with the colours of truth, but dark in its innermost depths :

" I love thee ! Am not I all thine ? "

We were far from the town, and the snow-clad plain looked in at the dark windows. Upon it was darkness, and around it was darkness, gross, motionless, silent, but the plain shone with its own latent coruscation, like the face of a corpse in the dark. In the over-heated room only one candle was burning, and on its reddening flame there appeared the white reflection of the deathlike plain.

" However sad the truth may be, I want to know it. May-be I shall die when I know it, but death rather than ignorance of the truth. In your kisses and embraces I feel a lie. In your eyes I see it. Tell

me the truth and I will leave you for ever," said I.

But she was silent. Her coldly searching look penetrated my inmost depths, and drawing out my soul, regarded it with strange curiosity.

And I cried: "Answer, or I will kill you!"

"Yes, do!" she quietly replied; "sometimes life is so wearisome. But the truth is not to be extracted by threat."

And then I knelt to her. Clasping her hand I wept, and prayed for pity and the truth.

"Poor fellow!" said she, putting her hand on my head, "poor fellow!"

"Pity me," I prayed, "I want so much to know the truth."

And as I looked at her pure forehead, I thought that truth must be there behind that slender barrier. And I madly wished to smash the skull to get at the truth. There, too, behind a white bosom beat a heart, and I madly wished to tear her bosom with my nails, to see but for once an unveiled human heart. And the pointed, motionless flame of the expiring candle burnt yellow—and the walls grew dark and seemed farther apart—and it felt so sad, so lonely, so eery.

"Poor fellow!" she said. "Poor fellow!"

And the yellow flame of the candle shivered spasmodically, burnt low, and became blue. Then it went out—and darkness enveloped us. I could not see her face, nor her eyes, for her arms embraced my head—and I no longer felt the lie. Closing my eyes I neither thought nor lived, but only absorbed the touch of her hands, and it

seemed to me true. And in the darkness she whispered in a strangely fearsome voice:

"Put your arms round me—I'm afraid."

Again there was silence, and again the gentle whisper fraught with fear:

"You desire the truth—but do I know it myself? And oh! don't I wish I did? Take care of me; oh! I'm so frightened!"

I opened my eyes. The paling darkness of the room fled in fear from the lofty windows, and gathering near the walls hid itself in the corners. But through the windows there silently looked in a something huge, deadly-white. It seemed as though someone's dead eyes were searching for us, and enveloping us in their icy gaze. Presently we pressed close together, while she whispered:

"Oh! I am so frightened!"

IV

I KILLED her. I killed her, and when she lay a flat, lifeless heap by the window, beyond which shone the dead-white plain, I put my foot on her corpse, and burst into a fit of laughter. It was not the laugh of a madman; oh, no! I laughed because my bosom heaved lightly and evenly, and within it all was cheerful, peaceful, and void, and because from my heart had fallen the worm which had been gnawing it. And bending down I looked into her dead eyes. Great, greedy of the light, they remained open, and were like the eyes of a wax doll—so round and dull were they, as though covered with mica. I was able to touch them with my fingers, open and shut them, and I was not afraid, because in those black, inscrutable pupils there lived no longer that demon of lying and doubt, which so long, so greedily, had sucked my blood.

When they arrested me I laughed. And this seemed terrible and wild to those who seized me. Some of them turned away from me in disgust, and went aside; others advanced threateningly straight towards me, with condemnation on their lips, but when my bright, cheerful glance met their eyes, their faces blanched, and their feet became rooted to the ground.

"Mad!" they said, and it seemed to me that they found comfort in the word, because it helped

to solve the enigma of how I could love and yet kill the beloved—and laugh. One of them only, a man of full habit and sanguine temperament, called me by another name, which I felt as a blow, and which extinguished the light in my eyes.

"Poor man!" said he in compassion, although devoid of anger—for he was stout and cheerful. "Poor fellow!"

"Don't!" cried I. "Don't call me that!"

I know not why I threw myself upon him. Indeed, I had no desire to kill him, or even to touch him; but all these cowed people who looked on me as a madman and a villain, were all the more frightened, and cried out so that it seemed to me again quite ludicrous.

When they were leading me out of the room, where the corpse lay, I repeated loudly and persistently, looking at the stout, cheerful man:

"I am happy, happy!"

And that was the truth.

V

Once, when I was a child, I saw in a menagerie a panther, which struck my imagination, and for long held my thoughts captive. It was not like the other wild beasts, which dozed without thought, or angrily gazed at the visitors. It walked from corner to corner, in one and the same line, with mathematical precision, each time turning on exactly the same spot, each time grazing with its tawny side one and the same metal bar of the cage. Its sharp, ravenous head was bent down, and its eyes looked straight before it, never once turning aside. For whole days a noisily chattering crowd trooped before its cage, but it kept up its tramp, and never once turned an eye on the spectators. A few of the crowd laughed, but the majority looked seriously, even sadly, at that living picture of heavy, hopeless brooding, and went away with a sigh. And as they retired, they cast once more round at her a doubting, inquiring glance and sighed—as though there was something in common between their own lot, free as they were, and that of the unhappy, eager wild beast. And when later on I was grown up, and people, or books, spoke to me of eternity, I called to mind the panther, and it seemed to me that I knew eternity and its pains.

Such a panther did I become in my stone cage. I walked and thought. I walked in one line right

across my cage from corner to corner, and along one short line travelled my thoughts, so heavy that it seemed that my shoulders carried not a head, but a whole world. But it consisted of but one word, but what an immense, what a torturing what an ominous word it was.

"Lie": that was the word.

Once more it crept forth hissing from all the corners, and twined itself about my soul; but it had ceased to be a little snake, it had developed into a great, glittering, fierce serpent. It bit me, and stifled me in its iron coils, and when I began to cry out with pain, as though my whole bosom were swarming with reptiles, I could only utter that abominable, hissing, serpent-like sound: "Lie!"

And as I walked, and thought, the grey, level asphalt of the floor changed before my eyes into a grey, transparent abyss. My feet ceased to feel the touch of the floor, and I seemed to be soaring at a limitless height above the fog and mist. And when my bosom gave forth its hissing groan, thence—from below—from under that rarifying, but still impenetrable shroud, there slowly issued a terrible echo. So slow and dull was it, as though it were passing through a thousand years. And every now and then, as the fog lifted, the sound became less loud, and I understood that there—below—it was still whistling like a wind, that tears down the trees, while it reached my ears in a short, ominous whisper:

"Lie!"

This mean whisper worked me up into a rage, and I stamped on the floor and cried :

" There is no lie ! I killed the lie."

Then I purposely turned aside, for I knew what it would reply. And it did reply slowly from the depths of the bottomless abyss :

" Lie ! "

The fact is, as you perceive, that I had made a grievous imstake. I had killed the woman, but made the lie immortal. Kill not a woman till you have, by prayer, by fire, and torture, torn from her soul the truth !

So thought I, and continued my endless tramp from corner to corner of the cell.

VI

Dark and terrible is the place to which she had carried the truth, and the lie—and I am going thither. At the very throne of Satan I shall overtake her, and falling on my knees will weep; and cry:

"Tell me the truth!"

But God! This is also a lie. There, there is darkness, there is the void of ages and of infinity, and there she is not—she is nowhere. But the lie remains, it is immortal. I feel it in every atom of the air, and when I breathe, it enters my bosom with a hissing, and then rends it—yes, rends!

Oh! what madness it is—to be man and to seek the truth! What pain!

Help! Help!

AN ORIGINAL

A MOMENT of silence had fallen on the company, and amid the clatter of knives on plates, and the confused talk at distant tables, the frou-frou of a dress, and the creaking of the floor under the brisk steps of the waiters, someone's quiet, meek voice was heard :

" But I *do* love negresses."

Antón Ivánovitch coughed over himself the *vodka* he was in the act of swallowing, and a waiter, who was collecting the plates, cast a glance of indiscriminate curiosity from under his brows. All turned with surprise to the speaker, and then for the first time took notice of the irregular little face with its red moustache, the ends of which were wet with *vodka* and soup, of the two dull, colourless little eyes, and of the carefully brushed head of Semyón Vasílyevitch Kotél'nikov. For five years they had been in the same service as Kotél'nikov, every day they had said " How do you do ? " and " Goodbye " to him, and talked to him about something or other ; on the 20th of every month after receiving their stipends, they had dined at the same restaurant as Kotél'nikov, as they were doing to-day ; and now for the first time they were really conscious of his presence. They perceived him, and were astonished. It seemed that Semyón Vasílyevitch was not so bad looking after all, if you did not count the

moustache, and the freckles which were like splashes of mud from a rubber tyre, that he was decently well dressed, and his tall white collar, though a paper one, was, at all events, clean.

Antón Ivánovitch, head of the office, coughing and still red with the exertion, looked at the confused Semyón Vasílyevitch attentively, with curiosity in his prominent eyes, and still choking, asked with emphasis :

" So you, Semyón, ah !—I beg your pardon, I forget."

" Semyón Vasílyevitch," Kotél'nikov reminded him, pronouncing it, not " Vasílitch," but fully " Vasílyevitch ;" and this pronunciation was pleasing to all as expressive of a feeling of worth and self-respect.

" So you, Semyón Vasílyevitch—love negresses?"

" Yes, I do, indeed."

And his voice, although rather weak, and so to speak, somewhat wrinkled like a shrivelled turnip, was nevertheless pleasant. Antón Ivánovitch pursed up his lower lip so that his gray moustache pressed against the tip of his red pitted nose, took in all the officials with his rounded eyes, and after an unavoidable pause, emitted a fat unctious laugh.

" Ha, ha, ha ! He loves negresses ! Ha, ha, ha ! "

And all laughed in a friendly manner, even the stout dour Pólzikov, who as a rule knew not how to laugh, gave a sickly neigh : " Hee ! hee ! hee ! "

Semyón Vasílyevitch laughed also, with a low staccato laugh, like a parched pea; he blushed with pleasure, but at the same time was rather afraid that some unpleasantness might arise.

"Are you really serious?" asked Antón Ivánovitch, when he had done laughing.

"Perfectly serious, sir. In them, those black women, there is something so ardent, or—so to speak—*exotic*."

"Exotic?"

And once more all spluttered with laughter. But, though they laughed, they considered Semyón Vasílyevitch quite a clever and educated man, since he knew such a rare word as "exotic." Then they began to argue with warmth that it was impossible for anyone to love a negress: they were black and greasy, they had such impossible thick lips, and smelt too strong of musk.

"But I love them," modestly persisted Semyón Vasílyevitch.

"Everyone to his choice," said Antón Ivánovitch with decision; "but I would rather fall in love with a nanny-goat than with one of those blacks."

But all were pleased that among them in the person of one of their own comrades there was to be found such an original person, that he loved negresses, and to honour the occasion they ordered another half-dozen of beer, and began to look with a certain contempt on the neighbouring tables, at which there sat no original people. They began to talk louder and with more freedom, and Semyón Vasílyevitch left off striking matches for his

cigarette, but waited till the attendant offered him a light. When the beer was all drunk up, and they had ordered more, the stout Pólzikov looked sternly at Semyón Vasílyevitch, and said reproachfully :

" How is it, Mr. Kotél'nikov, that we have never got beyond the " you " stage ?* Do not we serve in the same office ? We must drink to Brüderschaft, since you are such an excellent fellow."

" Certainly, I shall be delighted," Semyón Vasílyevitch consented. He beamed now with delight that at last they recognised and appreciated him, and then again feared somehow that they would thrash him ; at all events he kept his arm across his breast, to be ready, in case of need, to protect his face and well-brushed hair. After Pólzikov he drank to Brüderschaft with Tróïtzky and Novosyólov and the rest, and kissed them so heartily that his lips became swollen. Antón Ivánovitch did not offer to drink to Brüderschaft, but politely remarked :

" When you are passing our way, please call. Although you love negresses, still I have daughters, and it will interest them to see you. So you are really in earnest ? "

Semyón Vasílyevitch bowed, and although he was a bit unsteady from the amount of beer he had drunk, still all remarked that his manners were good. When Antón Ivánovitch went away they were still drinking, and afterwards went

* He means that they ought to " *tutoyer*," call one another " Thee " and " Thou." *Tr.*

noisily, the whole company, on to the Nevsky, where they gave way to none, but made all give way to them. Semyón Vasílyevitch walked in the middle, arm in arm with Tróïtzky and the sombre Pólzikov, and explained to them:

"Nay, friend Kóstya,* you don't understand the matter. In negresses there is something peculiar, something, so to speak, *exotic*."

"And I don't want to understand! They are black—black—nothing else."

"Nay, friend Kóstya, this is a matter requiring taste. Negresses are——"

Until that day Semyón Vasílyevitch had never even thought of negresses, and could not more exactly define what there was so desirable about them, so he repeated:

"My friend, they are ardent."

"Now, then, Kóstya, what are you quarrelling about?" angrily asked Tróïtzky, as he tripped up, and sploshed in a big swapped galoche. "You are a wonderful fellow for arguing; you never agree with anyone. Of course, he knows why he loves negresses. Drive on, Sénya!† love away! don't listen to fools! You're a brave fellow; we'll get up a scandal before long. By God! what a devil he is!"

"Black—black—nothing more," Pólzikov morosely insisted.

"Nay, Kóstya, you don't understand the

* Short for Constantine. *Tr.*
† Short for Semyôn. *Tr.*

matter," Semyón Vasílyevitch mildly declared; and so they went on, rolling and racketting, quarrelling, and jostling one another, but thoroughly contented.

At the end of a week the whole Department knew that the civil-servant, Kotél'nikov, was very fond of negresses. By the end of a month the porters of the neighbouring houses, the petitioners, and the policeman on duty at the corner, knew it too. The ladies who worked the typewriters took to looking at Semyón Vasílyevitch from the adjoining rooms; but he sat quiet and modest, and still was not sure whether he would be praised or thrashed. Already he had been at an evening party at Antón Ivánovitch's, had drunk tea with cherry jam upon a new damask table-cloth, and had explained that about negresses there was something *exotic*. The ladies looked confused, but the hostess' daughter Násteñka,† who had read novels, blinked her shortsighted eyes, and, adjusting her curls, asked:

"But, why?"

And all were very much pleased; but when the interesting guest had departed, they spoke of him with the greatest compassion, and Násteñka pronounced him the victim of a pernicious passion.

Semyón Vasílyevitch had been taken with Násteñka; but since he loved only negresses, he determined not to show his liking, and was cold and stand-offish, though strictly polite. And all

† Short for Anastâsiya. The "ñ" as in Spanish "cañon."

the way home he thought of negresses, how black and greasy and objectionable they were, and at the thought of kissing one of them, he felt a sort of heart-burn, and was inclined to weep quietly, and to write to his mother in the country to come to him. But in the night he overcame this attack of pusillanimity, and when he appeared at the office in the morning, by his whole appearance, by his red tie, and by the mysterious expression of his face, it was abundantly clear, that this man was very fond indeed of negresses.

Soon after this, Antón Ivánovitch, who took an interest in his fate, introduced him to a theatrical reporter; the reporter took him and treated him at a *café-chantant*, where he presented him to the Manager, Monsieur Jacques Ducquelau.

"Here is a gentleman," said the reporter, as he brought forward the modestly bowing Semyón Vasílyevitch, "here is a gentleman who is much enamoured of negresses; no one but negresses. He is an extraordinary original. Give him encouragement, Jacques Ivánovitch, for if such people be not encouraged, who should be? This, Jacques Ivánovitch, is a public matter."

The reporter slapped Semyón Vasílyevitch patronizingly on his narrow back, in its creaseless, tightly-fitting coat, and the Manager, a Frenchman, with a fierce black moustache, cast his eyes up to the sky, as though looking for something there, made a gesture of decision, and transfixing the still bowing civil-servant with his black eyes, said:

"Negresses! Excellent! I have here at present three beautiful negresses."

Semyón Vasílyevitch blanched slightly, but M. Jacques was very fond of his own establishment, and took no notice. The reporter requested: "Give him a free ticket, Jacques Ivánovitch; a season."

From that evening Semyón Vasílyevitch began to pay court to a negress, Mees Korràïto, the whites of whose eyes were like saucers, with pupils no larger than sloes. And when she turned on all this battery and made eyes at him, his feet turned cold, and as he bowed hastily, his well-pomatumed head glistened under the electric light, and he thought with grief of his poor mother, who lived in the country.

Of Russian Mees Korràïto understood not a word, but happily they found plenty of willing interpreters, who took to heart the interests of the young couple, and accurately transmitted to Semyón Vasílyevitch the gushing exclamations of the dusky fair.

"She says: 'She has never seen such a kind, handsome gentleman.' Is not that right, Mees?"

Miss Korràïto would incline her head again and again, show her teeth, which were as wide as the keys of a piano, and roll her saucers round on every side. And Semyón Vasíiyevitch would unconsciously incline his head too, and mutter:

"Tell her, please, that there is something *exotic* about negresses."

And all were satisfied. When Semyón Vasílyevitch for the first time kissed the hand of the negress, there assembled to see it, not only all the *artistes*, but many of the spectators, and one in particular, an old merchant, Bogdán Kornyéitch Selivérstov, burst into tears from tenderness and patriotic feelings. Then they drank champagne. For two days Semyón Vasilyevitch suffered from a painful palpitation of the heart, and did not go to the office. Several times he began a letter, "Dear Mamma," but he was too weak to finish it. When he went back to the office they invited him to the private room of his Excellency. Semyón Vasílyevitch smoothed with a comb his hair, which had begun to stick up during his illness, arranged the dark ends of his moustache, so as to speak more clearly, and collapsing with dread, went in.

"Look here, is it true, what they tell me, that you——" His Excellency hesitated, "is it true that you love negresses?"

"Quite true, your Excellency."

The general concentrated his gaze on his poll, on the smooth centre of which two thin locks obstinately stuck up, and trembled, and with some surprise, but at the same time with approval, asked:

"But why do you love them?"

"I cannot say, your Excellency," replied Semyón Vasílyevitch, whose courage had evaporated.

"What do you mean by 'I can't say'? Who,

then, can say? But don't be embarrassed, my dear sir. I like my subordinates to show self-reliance and initiative in general, provided, of course, they do not exceed certain legal bounds. Tell me candidly, as though you were talking to your father, why do you love negresses?"

"There is in them, your Excellency, something *exotic*."

That same evening at the general's whist table at the English Club, his Excellency, when he had dealt the cards with his puffy white hands, remarked with assumed carelessness:

"There's in my office an official who is terribly enamoured of negresses. An ordinary clerk, if you please."

The other three generals were jealous: each of them had at his office many officials, but they were the most ordinary, colourless, un-original people imaginable, of whom nothing could be said.

The choleric Anatón Petróvitch considered long, scored only one out of a certain four, and after the next deal said:

"I too—I have a subordinate, whose beard is half black and half red."

But all understood that the victory was on the side of his Excellency; the subordinate mentioned was in no respect responsible for the fact that his beard was half black and half red, and probably was not even pleased to have it so; while the official in point, independently and of his own free will, loved negresses; and such a predilection undoubtedly testified to his originality of taste.

But his Excellency, as though he remarked nothing, continued :

" He affirms that in negresses there is something *exotic*."

The existence in the Second Department of an extraordinary original obtained for it the most flattering popularity among official circles in the Capital, and begat, as is always the case, many unsuccessful and pitiful imitators. A certain grey-haired clerk in the Sixth Department, with a large family, who had sat unremarked at his table for twenty-eight years, proclaimed publicly that he could bark like a dog ; and when they only laughed at him, and in all the rooms began to bark, and grunt, and neigh, he was put out of countenance, and took to a fortnight's drunk, forgetting even to send in a report of sickness, as he had always done for the past twenty-eight years. Another official, a youngish man, pretended to fall in love with the wife of the Chinese Ambassador, and for some time attracted universal observation, and even sympathy. But experienced eyes soon distinguished the pitiful, dishonest, pretence from the true originality, and the failure was contemptuously consigned to the abyss of his former obscurity. There were other attempts of the same kind, and among the officials in general there was remarked this year a peculiar elation of spirit, and a long-hidden desire for originality seized the youths of the service with particular severity, and in some cases even led to tragic consequences. Thus one clerk, of good birth, being unable to invent any-

thing original, had the impudence to insult his superior, and was promptly cashiered. Even against, Semyón Vasílyevitch there rose up enemies, who openly affirmed that he knew nothing whatever about negresses. But as an answer to them there appeared in one of the dailies an interview, in which Semyón Vasílyevitch publicly declared, with the permission of his chief, that he loved negresses because there was something *exotic* in them. And the star of Semyón Vasílyevitch shone out with a new, undimming light.

At Antón Ivánovitch's evenings he was now the most desirable guest, and Násteñka more than once wept bitterly, so sorry was she for his ruined youth; but he would sit proudly at the very middle of the table, and feeling himself the synosure of all eyes, put on a somewhat melancholy, but at the same time exotic face. And to all, to Antón Ivánovitch himself, to his guests, and even to the deaf old woman who washed up the dirty things in the kitchen, it was a pleasure to know that such an original man visited their house quite without ceremony. But Semyón Vasílyevitch went home and wept upon his pillow, because he loved Násteñka exceedingly, and hated the damned Mees Korràïto with all his soul.

Before Easter there was a report that Semyón Vasílyevitch was going to marry Mees Korràïto the negress, who for that reason would adopt Authodoxy, and leave the service of M. Jacques Ducquelau, and that his Excellency himself would give away the bride. Fellow civil-servants, petitioners,

and porters congratulated Semyón Vasílyevitch: and he bowed, only not so low as before, but still more politely, and his bald, polished head glistened in the rays of the spring sunshine.

At the last evening party given by Antón Ivánovitch before the wedding, he was a positive hero; but Násteñka every half-hour or so ran off to her own room to cry, and then so powdered herself, that the powder was scattered from her face like flour from a mill-stone, and both her neighbours became correspondingly whitened. At supper all congratulated the bridegroom and drank his health; but Antón Ivánovitch, as he took his leave of his guests, said:

"There is one interesting question, my friend, what colour will your children be?"

"Striped," glumly said Pólzikov.

"How striped?" asked the guests in surprise.

"Why, in this way: one stripe white, and one black, then another white, and so on," Pólzikov explained quite despondently, for he was sorry with all his heart for his old friend.

"That's impossible!" excitedly exclaimed Semyón Vasílyevitch, who had grown pale at the thought. But Násteñka, no longer able to contain herself, burst out sobbing and ran out of the room, whereby she caused universal confusion.

For two years Semyón Vasílyevitch was the happiest of men, and all rejoiced when they looked at him, and recalled his unusual fate. Once he was invited, together with his spouse, to his Excellency's; and on the birth of a boy, he

received considerable assistance from the reserve fund, and soon after that he was promoted, out of his turn, to be assistant secretary of the fourth office of the department. And the child was born not striped, but only slightly grey, or rather olive-coloured. Everywhere Semyón Vasílyevitch talked of his warm love for his wife and son ; but he was never in a hurry to return home, and when he did get there he was in no hurry to pull the bell-handle. But when there met him on the threshold those teeth broad as piano-keys, and the white saucers rolled, and when his smoothly brushed head was pressed against something black, greasy, and smelling of musk, he felt quite faint with grief, and thought of those happy people who had white wives, and white children.

"Dear!" said he submissively, and on the insistence of the happy mother went to look at the baby. He hated that thick-lipped baby of a greyish colour like asphalt, but he obediently nursed it, meditating in the depths of his soul on the possibility of dropping it suddenly on the floor.

After long vacillation and hidden sighs he wrote to his mother in the country about his marriage, aed to his surprise received from her a most joyful answer. She also was pleased at having such an original for her son, and that his Excellency himself had given away the bride. But with regard to the colour, and other disabilities of the bride, she expressed herself thus :

" Let her face be that of a sheep, if only her soul be human."

At the end of two years Semyón Vasílyevitch died of typhus fever. Before the end he sent for the parish priest, who looked with curiosity on the *quondam* Mees Korraito, stroked his full beard, and said meaningly, "N . . . y . . es!" But it was evident that he respected Semyón Vasílyevitch for his originality, although he looked on it as sinful.

When his reverence stooped down to the dying man, the latter gathered together the remnants of his strength, and opened his mouth wide to cry:

"I hate that black devil!"

But he recalled his Excellency, and the help from the reserve fund, he recalled the kindly Antón Ivánovitch, and Násteñka, and looking at the black weeping countenance, said softly:

"Father, I love negresses very much. In them there is something *exotic*."

With his last efforts he gave to his emaciated face the semblance of a happy smile, and expired with it on his lips.

And the earth received him without emotion, not asking whether he loved negresses or no, brought his body to corruption, mingled his bones with those of other dead people, and annihilated every trace of the white paper-collar.

But the Second Department long cherished the memory of Semyón Vasílyevitch, and when the waiting petitioners began to grow weary, the porter would take them to his room, to smoke, and would tell them tales of the wonderful civil-servant who was so awfully fond of negresses. And all, narrator and listeners, were pleased.

SILENCE

I

On a moonlight night in May, when the nightingales were singing, his wife came to Father Ignáty, who was sitting in his study. Her face was expressive of suffering, and the small lamp trembled in her hand. She came up to her husband, touched him on the shoulder, and said sobbing :

" Father, let us go to Vyérotchka ! "*

Without turning his head, Father Ignáty frowned at his wife over his spectacles, and looked long and fixedly, until she made a motion of discomfort with her free hand, and sat down on a low divan.

" How pitiless you *both* are," said she slowly and with strong emphasis on the word " both," and her kindly puffed face was contorted with a look of pain and hardness, as though she wished to express by her looks how hard people were—her husband and her daughter.

Father Ignáty gave a laugh and stood up. Closing his book, he took off his spectacles, put them into their case, and fell into a brown study. His big black beard, shot with silver threads, lay in a graceful curve upon his chest, and rose and fell slowly under his deep breathing.

" Well, then, we will go ! " said he.

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* Short for Vyéra—Faith. *Tr.*

Ol'ga Stepánovna rose quickly, and asked in a timid, ingratiating voice :

" Only don't scold her, father ! You know what she is."

Vyéra's room was in a belvedere at the top of the house, and the narrow wooden stairs bent and groaned under the heavy steps of Father Ignáty. Tall and ponderous, he was obliged to stoop so as not to hit his head against the ceiling above, and he frowned fastidiously when his wife's white jacket touched his face. He knew that nothing would come of their conversation with Vyéra.

" What, is that you ? " asked Vyéra, lifting one bare arm to her eyes. The other arm lay on the top of the white summer counterpane, from which it was scarcely distinguishable so white, transparent and cold was it.

" Vyérotchka ! " the mother began, but gave a sob and was silent.

" Vyéra ! " said the father, endeavouring to soften his dry, hard voice. " Vyéra, tell us what is the matter with you ? "

Vyéra was silent.

" Vyéra, are your mother and I undeserving of your confidence ? Do we not love you ? Have you anyone nearer to you than ourselves ? Speak to us of your grief, and believe me, an old and experienced man, you will feel the better for it. And so shall we. Look at your old mother, how she is suffering."

" Vyérotchka——!"

"And to me——" his voice trembled, as though something in it had broken in two, "and to me, is it easy, think you? As though I did not see that you were devoured by some grief——, but what is it? And I, your father, am kept in ignorance. Is it right?"

Vyéra still kept silence. Father Ignáty stroked his beard with special precaution, as though he feared that his fingers would involuntarily begin to tear it, and continued:

"Against my wishes you went to S. Petersburg—did I curse you for your disobedience? Or did I refuse you money? Or, say you, I was not kind? Well, why don't you speak? See, the good your S. Petersburg has done you!"

Father Ignáty ceased speaking, and there rose before his mind's eye something big, granite-built, terrible, full of unknown dangers, and of strange callous people. And there alone, and weak was his Vyéra, and there she had been ruined. An angry hatred of that terrible incomprehensible city arose in Father Ignáty's soul, together with anger towards his daughter, who kept silent, so obstinately silent.

"S. Petersburg has nothing to do with it," said Vyéra crossly, and closed her eyes. "But there is nothing the matter with me. You had better go to bed, it's late."

"Vyérotchka!" groaned her mother. "My little daughter confide in me!"

"Oh! mamma!" said Veyra, impatiently interrupting her.

Father Ignáty sat down on a chair and began to laugh.

"Well then, nothing is the matter after all?" he asked ironically.

"Father," said Vyéra, in a sharp voice, raising herself up on her bed, "you know that I love you and mamma. But—I do feel so dull. All this will pass away. Really, you had better go to bed. I want to sleep, too. To-morrow, or sometime, we will have a talk."

Father Ignáty rose abruptly, so that his chair bumped against the wall, and took his wife's arm.

"Let's go!"

"Vyérotchka——!"

"Let's go—I tell you," cried Father Ignáty. "If she has forgotten God, shall we too! Why should we!"

He drew Ol'ga Stepánovna away, almost by main force, and as they were descending the stairs, she, dragging her steps more slowly, said in an angry whisper:

"Ugh! pope,* it's you who have made her so. It's from you she has got this manner. And you'll have to answer for it. Ah! how wretched I am—"

And she began to cry, and kept blinking her eyes, so that she could not see the steps, and letting her feet go down as it were into an abyss below, into which she wished to precipitate herself.

From that day forward Father Ignáty ceased to talk to his daughter, and she seemed not to

* "Pope" means parish priest in Russia. *Tr.*

notice the change. As before, she would now lie in her room, now go about, frequently wiping her eyes with the palms of her hands, as though they were obstructed. And oppressed by the silence of these two people, the pope's wife, who was fond of jokes and laughter, became lost and timid, hardly knowing what to say or do.

Sometimes Vyéra went out for a walk. About a week after the conversation related above, she went out in the evening as usual. They never saw her again alive, for that evening she threw herself under a train, which cut her in two.

Father Ignáty buried her himself. His wife was not present at the church, because at the news of Vyéra's death she had had a stroke. She had lost the use of her feet and hands and tongue, and lay motionless in a semi-darkened room, while close by her the bells toiled in the belfry. She heard them all coming out of church, heard the choristers singing before their house, and tried to raise her hand to cross herself, but the hand would not obey her will. She wished to say: "Good-bye, Vyéra," but her tongue lay inert in her mouth, swollen and heavy. She lay so still that anyone who saw her would have thought that she was resting, or asleep. Only—her eyes were open.

There were many people in the church at the funeral, both acquaintances of Father Ignáty's and strangers. All present compationated Vyéra, who had died such a terrible death, and they tried in Father Ignáty's movements and voice

to find signs of profound grief. They were not fond of Father Ignáty, because he was rough and haughty in his manners, harsh and unforgiving with his penitents, while himself jealous and greedy, he availed himself of every chance to take more than his dues from a parishioner. They all wished to see him suffering, broken-down, and acknowledging that he was doubly guilty of his daughter's death: as a harsh father, and as a bad priest, who could not protect his own flesh and blood from sin. So they all watched him with curiosity, but he, feeling their eyes directed on his broad powerful back, endeavoured to straighten it, and thought not so much of his dead daughter as of not compromising his dignity.

"A well-seasoned pope," Karzenov the carpenter, to whom he still owed money for some frames, said with a nod in his direction.

And so, firm and upright, Futher Ignáty went to the cemetery, and came back the same. And not till he reached the door of his wife's room did his back bend a little; but that might have been because the door was not high enough for his stature. Coming in from the light he could only with difficulty distinguish his wife's face, and when he succeeded in so doing, he perceived that it was perfectly still, and that there were no tears in her eyes. In them was there neither anger nor grief, they were dumb, and painfully, obstinately silent, as was also her whole obese feeble body that was pressed against the bed-rail.

"Well, what? How are you feeling?" Father Ignáty enquired.

But her lips were dumb, and her eyes were silent. Father Ignáty laid his hand on her forehead, it was cold and damp, and Ol'ga Stepánovna gave no sign whatever that she had felt his touch. And when he removed his hands from her forehead, two deep, grey eyes looked at him without blinking; they seemed almost black on account of the dilation of the pupils, and in them was neither grief nor anger.

"Well, I will go to my own room," said Father Ignáty, who had turned cold and frightened.

He went through the guest-chamber, where everything was clean and orderly as ever, and the high-backed chairs stood swathed in white covers, like corpses in their shrouds. At one of the windows hung a wire cage, but it was empty and the door was open.

"Nastásya!" Father Ignáty called, and his voice seemed to him rough, and he felt awkward, that he had called so loud in those quiet rooms, so soon after the funeral of their daughter. "Nastásya," he called more gently, "where's the canary?"

The cook, who had cried so much that her nose was swollen and become as red as a beet, answered rudely:

"Don't know. It flew away."

"Why did you let it go?" said Father Ignáty angrily knitting his brows.

Nastásya burst out crying, and wiping her

eyes with the ends of a print kerchief she wore over her head, said through her tears :

" The dear little soul of the young mistress. How could I keep it ? "

And it seemed even to Father Ignáty that the happy little yellow canary, which used to sing always with it's head thrown back, was really the soul of Vyéra, and that if it had not flown away, it would have been impossible to say that Vyéra was dead. And he became still more angry with the cook, and shouted :

" Get along ! " and when Nastásya did not at once make for the door, added " Fool ! "

II

From the day of the funeral silence reigned in the little house. It was not stillness, for that is the mere absence of noise, but it was *silence* which means that those who kept silence could, apparently, have spoken if they had pleased. So thought Father Ignáty when, entering his wife's chamber, he would meet an obstinate glance, so heavy that it was as though the whole air were turned to lead, and was pressing on his head and back. So he thought when he examined his daughter's music, on which her very voice was impressed; her books, and her portrait, a large one painted in colours which she had brought with her from S. Petersburg. In examining her portrait a certain order was evolved.

First he would look at her neck, on which the light was thrown in the portrait, and would imagine to himself a scratch on it, such as was on the neck of the dead Vyéra, and the origin of which he could not understand. And every time he meditated on the cause. If it had been the train which struck it, it would have shattered her whole head, and the head of the dead Vyéra was quite uninjured.

Could it be that someone had touched it with his foot when carrying home the corpse; or was it done unintentionally with the nail?

But to think long about the details of her death was horrible to Father Ignáty, so he would pass on to the eyes of the portrait. They were black and beautiful, with long eyelashes, the thick shadow of which lay below, wherefore the whites seem peculiarly bright, and the two eyes were as though enclosed in black mourning frames. The unknown artist, a man of talent, had given to them a strange expression. It was as though between the eyes, and that on which they rested, there was a thin, transparent film. It reminded one of the black top of a grand piano, on which the summer dust lay in a thin layer, almost imperceptible, but still dimming the brightness of the polished wood. And wherever Father Ignáty placed the portrait, the eyes continually followed him, not speaking, but silent; and the silence was so clear, that it seemed possible to hear it. And by degrees Father Ignáty came to think that he did hear the silence.

Every morning after the Eucharist Father Ignáty would go to the sitting room, would take in at a glance the empty cage, and all the well-known arrangement of the room, sit down in an arm-chair, close his eyes and listen to the silence of the house. It was something strange. The cage was gently and tenderly silent; and grief and tears, and far-away dead laughter were felt in that silence. The silence of his wife, softed by the intervening walls, was obstinate, heavy as lead; and terrible, so terrible that Father Ignáty turned cold on the hottest day. Endless, cold as the

grave, mysterious as death, was the silence of his daughter. It was as though the silence were a torture to itself, and as though it longed passionately to pass into speech, but that something strong and dull as a machine, held it motionless, and stretched it like a wire. And then somewhere in the far distance, the wire began to vibrate and emit a soft, timid, pitiful sound. Father Ignáty with a mixture of joy and fear, would catch this incipient sound, and pressing his hands on the arms of the chair, would stretch his head forward and wait for the sound to reach him. But it would break off, and lapse into silence.

"Nonsense!" Father Ignáty would angrily exclaim, and rise from the chair, tall and upright as ever. From the window was to be seen the market-place, bathed in sunlight, paved with round, even stones, and on the other side the stone wall of a long, window-less storehouse. At the corner stood a cab, like a statue in clay, and it was incomprehensible why it continued to stand there, when for whole hours together not a single passer-by was to be seen

III

Out of the house Father Ignáty had much talking to do: with his ecclesiastical subordinates, and with his parishioners when he was performing his duties; and sometimes with acquaintances when he played with them at "Préférence."* But, when he returned home, he thought that he had been all the day silent. This came of the fact that with none of these people could he speak of the question, which was the chief and most important of all to him, which racked his thoughts every night: Why had Vyera died?

Father Ignáty was unwilling to admit to himself that it was impossible now to solve this difficulty, and kept on thinking that it was still possible.

Every night—and they were all now for him sleepless—he would recall the moment when he and his wife had stood by Vyéra's bed at darkest midnight, and he had entreated her "Speak!" And when in his recollections he arrived at that word, even the rest of the scene presented itself to him as different to what it had really been. His closed eyes preserved in their darkness a vivid, unblurred picture of that night; they saw distinctly Vyéra lifting herself up upon her bed and saying with a smile——. But what did she say? And that unuttered word of her's, which

* Name of a game at cards. *Tr.*

would solve the whole question, seemed so near, that if he were to stretch his ear, and still the beating of his heart, then, then he would hear it—and at the same time it was so infinitely, so desperately far.

Father Ignáty would rise from his bed, and stretching forth his clasped hands in a gesture of supplication, entreat:

"Vyéra!"

And silence was the answer he received.

One evening Father Ignáty went to Ol'ga Stepánovna's room, where he had not been for about a week, and sitting down near the head of her bed, he turned away from her doleful, obstinate gaze, and said:

"Mother! I want to talk to you about Vyéra. Do you hear?"

Her eyes were silent, and Father Ignáty raising his voice began to speak in the loud and severe tones, with which he addressed his penitents:

"I know you think that I was the cause of Vyéra's death. But consider, did I love her less than you? You judge strangely——I was strict, but did that prevent her from doing as she pleased? I made little of the respect due to a father; I meekly bowed my neck, when she, with no fear of my curse, went away——thither. And you——mother——did not you with tears entreat her to remain, until I ordered you to be silent. Am I responsible for her being born hard-hearted? Did I not teach her of God, of humility, and of love?

Father Ignáty gave a swift glance into his wife's eyes, and turned away.

"What could I do with her, if she would not open her grief to me. Command? I commanded her. Intreat? I intreated. What? Do you think I ought to have gone down on my knees before the little chit of a girl, and wept, like an old woman! What she had got in her head, and where she got it, I know not. Cruel, heartless daughter!"

Father Ignáty smote his knees with his fists.

"She was devoid of love—that's what it was! I know well enough what she called me—a tyrant. You she did love, didn't she? You who wept, and ——humbled yourself?"

Father Ignáty laughed noiselessly.

"Lo—o—ved! That's it, to comfort you she chose such a death—a cruel, disgraceful death! She died on the ballast, in the dirt——like a d—d—og, to which some one gives a kick on the muzzle."

Father Ignáty's voice sounded low and hoarse:

"I'm ashamed! I'm ashamed to go out into the street! I'm ashamed to come out of the chancel! I'm ashamed before God. Cruel, unworthy daughter! One could curse you in your grave——"

When Father Ignáty glanced again at his wife, she had fainted, and did not come to herself for some hours. And when she did come to herself her eyes were silent, and it was impossible to know, whether she understood what Father Ignáty had said to her, or no.

That same night—it was a moonlight night in July, still, warm, soundless—Father Ignáty crept on tiptoe, so that his wife and her nurse should not hear him, up the stairs to Vyéra's room. The window of the belvidere had not been opened since the death of Vyéra, and the atmosphere was dry and hot, with a slight smell of scorching from the iron roof, which had become heated during the day. There was an uninhabited and deserted feeling about the apartment, from which man had been absent so long, and in which the wood of the walls, the furniture and other objects gave out a faint smell of growing decay.

The moonlight fell in a bright stripe across the window and floor, and reflected by the carefully washed white boards it illumined the corners with a dim semi-light, and the clean white bed with it's two pillows, a big one and a little one, looked unearthly and ghostly. Father Ignáty opened the window, and the fresh air poured into the room in a broad stream, smelling of dust, of the neighbouring river, and the flowering lime, and bore on it a scarcely audible chorus, apparently, of people rowing a boat, and singing as they rowed.

Stepping silently on his naked feet, like a white ghost, Father Ignáty approached the empty bed, and bending his knees fell face-down on the pillows, and embraced them—the place where Vyéra's face ought to have been.

He lay long so. The song became louder, and then gradually became inaudible ; but he still lay

there, with his long black hair dishevelled over his shoulders and on the bed.

The moon had moved on, and the room had become darker, when Father Ignáty raised his head, and throwing into his voice all the force of a long suppressed and long unacknowledged love, and listening to his words, as though not he, but Vyéra, were listening to them, exclaimed :

" Vyéra, my daughter ! Do you understand, what it means, daughter ! Little daughter ! My heart ! my blood ! my life ! Your father, your poor old father, already grey and feeble."

His shoulders shook, and all his heavy frame was convulsed. With a shudder Father Ignáty whispered tenderly, as to a little child :

" Your poor old father asks you. Yes, Vyérotchka, he entreats. He weeps. He who never was so wont. Your grief, my little daughter, your suffering, are my own. More than mine."

Father Ignáty shook his head.

" More, Vyérotchka. What is death to me, an old man ? But you—. If only you had realised, how tender, weak and timid you were ! Do you remember how when you pricked your finger and the blood came, you began to cry. My little daughter ! And you do indeed love me, love me dearly, I know. Every morning you kiss my hand. Speak, speak of what is grieving you—and I with these two hands will strangle your grief. They are still strong, Vyéra, these hands."

His locks shook.

" Speak ! "

He fixed his eyes on the wall, and stretching out his hands, cried :

" Speak ! "

But the chamber was silent, and from the far distance was borne in the sound of the long and short whistles of a locomotive.

Father Ignáty, rolling his distended eyes, as though there stood before him the frightful ghost of a mutilated corpse, slowly raised himself from his knees, and with uncertain movement lifted his hand, with the fingers separated and nervously stretched out, to his head. Going out by the door, Father Ignáty sharply whispered the word :

" Speak ! "

And silence was the answer he received.

- Silence is ominous to man for death.

IV

THE next day, after an early and solitary dinner, Father Ignáty went to the cemetery—for the first time since the death of his daughter. It was close, deserted, and still, as though the hot day were but an illumined night; but Father Ignáty, as his habit was, with an effort straightened his back, looked sternly from side to side, and thought that he was the same as heretofore. He did not regard the new, but terrible, weakness of his legs, nor that his long beard had grown completely white, as though bitten by a hard frost. The way to the cemetery led through the long, straight street, which sloped gently upwards, and at the end of which gleamed white the roof of the lych-gate, which was like a black, ever-open mouth edged with gleaming teeth.

Vyéra's grave lay in the very depth of the cemetery, where the gravelled pathways ended; and Father Ignáty had to wander for long on the narrow tracks, along a broken line of little mounds, which protruded from the grass, forgotten of all, deserted of all. Here and there he came upon monuments sloping and green with age, broken-down railings, and great heavy stones cast upon the ground, and pressing it with a sort of grim senile malignity.

Vyéra's grave was next to one of these stones. It was covered with new sods, already turning

yellow, while all around it was green. A rowan-tree was intertwined with a maple, and a widely spreading clump of hazel stretched its pliant branches with rough furred leaves over the grave. Sitting down on the neighbouring tomb, and sighing repeatedly, Father Ignáty looked round, cast a glance at the cloudless desert sky, in which the red-hot disc of the sun hung suspended in perfect immobility—and then only did he become conscious of that profound stillness, like nothing else in the world, which holds sway over a cemetery, when there is not a breath of wind to rustle the dead leaves. And once more the thought came to Father Ignáty, that this was not stillness, but silence. It overflowed to the very brick walls of the cemetery, climbed heavily over them, and submerged the city. And its end was only there—in those grey, stubbornly, obstinately silent eyes.

Father Ignáty shrugged his shoulders, which were becoming cold, and let his eyes fall on Vyéra's grave. He gazed long at the short little seared stalks of grass, which had been torn from the ground somewhere in the wide wind-swept fields, and had failed to take root in the new soil; and he could not realise that there, under that grass, at a few feet from him, lay Vyéra. And this nearness seemed incomprehensible, and imbued his soul with a confusion and strange alarm. She, of whom he was accustomed to think as having for ever disappeared in the dark depth of infinity, was here, close—and it was difficult to understand that nevertheless she was not, and never would

be again. And it seemed to Father Ignáty that if he spoke some word, which he almost felt upon his lips, or if he made some movement, Vyéra would come forth from the tomb, and stand up as tall and beautiful as ever. And that not only would she arise; but that all the dead, who could be felt, so awesome in their solemn cold silence, would rise too.

Father Ignáty took off his black wide-brimmed hat, smoothed his wavy locks, and said in a whisper:

"Vyéra!"

He became uneasy lest he should be heard by some stranger, and stood up on the tomb and looked over the crosses. But there was no one near, and he repeated aloud:

"Vyéra!"

It was Father Ignáty's old voice dry and exacting, and it was strange that a demand made with such force remained without answer.

"Vyéra!"

Loud and persistently the voice called, and when it was silent for a moment it seemed as though somewhere below a vague answer resounded. And Father Ignáty looked once more around, removed his hair from his ears, and laid them on the rough pirckly sod.

"Vyéra! Speak!"

And Father Ignáty felt with horror that something cold as the tomb penetrated his ear, and froze the brain, and that Vyéra spoke—but what she said was ever the same long silence. It became

ever more and more alarming and terrible, and when Father Ignáty dragged his head with an effort from the ground, pale as that of a corpse, it seemed to him that the whole air trembled and vibrated with a resonant silence, as though a wild storm had arisen on that terrible sea. The silence choked him: it kept rolling backwards and forwards through his head in icy waves, and stirred his hair: it broke against his bosom, which groaned beneath the shocks. Trembling all over, casting from side to side quick, nervous glances, he slowly raised himself, and strove with torturing efforts to straighten his back, and to restore the proud carriage to his trembling body. And in this he succeeded. With slow deliberation he shook the dust from his knees, put on his hat, made the sign of the cross three times over the grave, and went with even, firm gait, and yet did not recognise the well-known cemetery, and lost his way.

"Lost my way!" he laughed, and stood still at the branching paths.

He stood still for a moment, and then without thinking turned to the left, because it was impossible to stand still and wait. The silence pursued him. It rose from the green graves: the grim grey crosses breathed it: it came forth in thin suffocating streams from every pore of the ground, which was sated with corpses. Father Ignáty's steps became quicker and quicker. Dazed he went round the same paths again and again, he leapt the graves, stumbled against the railings, grasped the prickly tin wreaths, and the soft stuff

tore to pieces in his hands. Only one thought, that of getting out, was left in his head. He rushed from side to side, and at last ran noiselessly, a tall figure, almost unrecognizable in his streaming cassock, and with his hair floating on the air. More frightened than at the sight of a corpse risen from the grave, would have been anyone who had met this wild figure of a man running leaping, waving his arms,—if he had recognised his mad, distorted face, and heard the dull rattle that escaped from his open mouth.

At full run Father Ignáty jumped out upon the little square at the end of which stood the low white mortuary chapel. In the porch on a little bench there dosed an old man, who looked like a pilgrim from afar, and near him two old beggar-women were flying at one another, quarrelling and scolding.

When Father Ignáty reached home, it was already getting dark, and the lamp was lit in Ol'ga Stepánovna's room. Without change of clothes or removing his hat, torn and dusty, he came hurriedly to his wife and fell on his knees.

"Mother—O'lya*—pity me!" he sobbed; "I am going out of my mind."

He beat his head against the edge of the table, and sobbed tumultuously, painfully, as a man does who never weeps. He lifted his head, confident that in a moment a miracle would be performed, and that his wife would speak, and pity him.

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* Diminutive of Ol'ga. *Tr.*

"Dear!"

With his whole big body he stretched out towards his wife, and met the look of the grey eyes. In them there was neither compassion nor anger. May-be his wife forgave and pitied him, but in those eyes there was neither pity nor forgiveness. They were dumb and silent.

. . . . . .

And the whole desolate house was silent.

LAUGHTER

I

At 6.30 I was certain that she would come, and I was desperately happy. My coat was fastened only by the top button, and fluttered in the cold wind; but I felt no cold. My head was proudly thrown back, and my student's cap was cocked on the back of my head; my eyes with respect to the men they met were expressive of patronage and boldness, with respect to the women of a seductive tenderness. Although she had been my only love for four whole days, I was so young, and my heart was so rich in love, that I could not remain perfectly indifferent to other women. My steps were quick, bold and free.

At 6.45 my coat was fastened by two buttons, and I looked only at the women, but no longer with a seductive tenderness, but rather with disgust. I only wanted *one* woman—the others might go to the devil; they only confused me, and with their seeming resemblance to Her gave to my movements an uncertain and jerky indecision.

At 6.55 I felt warm

At 6.58 I felt cold.

As it struck seven I was convinced that she would not come.

By 8.30 I presented the appearance of the most pitiful creature in the world. My coat was fastened with all its buttons, collar turned up, cap tilted over my nose, which was blue with cold; my hair was over my forehead, my moustache and eyelashes were whitening with rime, and my teeth gently chattered. From my shambling gait, and bowed back, I might have been taken for a fairly hale old man returning from a party at the almshouse.

And She was the cause of all this—She! "Oh, the Dev—! No, I won't. Perhaps she could not get away, or she is ill, or dead. She's dead!"—and I swore.

II.

"Eugéniya Nikoláevna will be there to-night," one of my companions, a student, remarked to me, without the slightest *arrière pensée*. He could not know how that I had waited for her in the frost from seven to half-past eight.

"Indeed," I replied, as in deep thought, but within my soul there leapt out: "Oh, the Dev— !" "There" meant at the Polózovs' evening party. Now the Polózovs were people with whom I was not upon visiting terms. But this evening I would be there.

"You fellows!" I shouted cheerfully, "to-day is Christmas Day, when everybody enjoys himself. Let us do so too."

"But how?" one of them mournfully replied.

"And where?" continued another.

"We will dress up, and go round to all the evening parties," I decided.

And these insensate individuals actually became cheerful. They shouted, and leapt, and sang. They thanked me for my suggestion, and counted up the amount of "the ready" available. In the course of half an hour we had collected all the lonely, disconsolate students in town; and when we had recruited a cheerful dozen or so of leaping devils, we repaired to a hairdresser's—he was also a costumier—and let in there the cold, and youth, and laughter.

I wanted something sombre and handsome, with a shade of elegant sadness ; so I requested :

" Give me the dress of a Spanish grandee."

Apparently this grandee had been very tall, for I was altogether swallowed up in his dress, and felt there as absolutely alone as though I had been in a wide, empty hall. Getting out of this costume, I asked for something else.

" Would you like to be a clown ? Motley with bells."

" A clown, indeed ! " I exclaimed with contempt.

" Well, then, a bandit. Such a hat and dagger ! "

Oh ! dagger ! Yes, that would suit my purpose. But unfortunately the bandit whose clothes they gave me had scarcely grown to full stature. Most probably he had been a corrupt youth of eight years. His little hat would not cover the back of my head, and I had to be dragged out of his velvet breeks as out of a trap. A page's dress was no go : it was all spotted like the pard. The monk's cowl was all in holes.

" Look sharp ; it's late," said my companions, who were already dressed, trying to hurry me up.

There was but one costume left—that of a distinguished Chinaman. " Give me the Chinaman's," said I with a wave of my hand. And they gave it me. It was the devil knows what ! I am not speaking of the costume itself. I pass over in silence those idiotic flowered boots, which were too short for me, and reached only halfway to my knees ; but in the remaining, by far the most

essential part, stuck out like two incomprehensible adjuncts on either side of my feet. I say nothing of the pink rag which covered my head like a wig, and was tied by threads to my ears, so that they protruded and stood up like a bat's. But the mask!

It was, if one may use the expression, a face *in the abstract*. It had nose, eyes, and mouth all right enough, and all in the proper places; but there was nothing human about it. A human being could not look so placid—even in his coffin. It was expressive neither of sorrow, nor cheerfulness, nor surprise—it expressed absolutely nothing! It looked at you squarely, and placidly—and an uncontrollable laughter overwhelmed you. My companions rolled about on the sofas, sank impotently down on the chairs, and gesticulated.

"It will be the most original mask of the evening," they declared.

I was ready to weep; but no sooner did I glance in the mirror than I too was convulsed with laughter. Yes, it will be a most original mask!

"In no circumstances are we to take off our masks," said my companions on the way. "We will give our word."

"Honour bright!"

III

Positively it was the most original mask. People followed me in crowds, turned me about, jostled me, pinched me. But when, harried, I turned on my persecutors in anger—uncontrollable laughter seized them. Wherever I went, a roaring cloud of laughter encompassed and pressed on me; it moved together with me, and I could not escape from this circle of mad mirth. Sometimes it seized even myself, and I shouted, sang, and danced till everything seemed to go round before me, as if I was drunk. But how remote everything was from me! And how solitary was I under that mask! At last they left me in peace. With anger and fear, with malice and tenderness intermingling, I looked at her.

"'Tis I."

Her long eyelashes were lifted slowly in surprise, and a whole sheaf of black rays flashed upon me, and a laugh, resonant, joyous, bright as the spring sunshine—a laugh answered me.

"Yes, it is I; I, I say," I insisted with a smile. "Why did you not come this evening?"

But she only laughed, laughed joyously.

"I suffered so much; I felt so hurt," said I, imploring an answer.

But she only laughed. The black sheen of her eyes was extinguished, and still more brightly her smile lit up. It was the sun indeed, but burning, pitiless, cruel.

"What's the matter with you?'

" Is it really you ? " said she, restraining herself. " How comical you are ! "

My shoulders were bowed, and my head hung down—such despair was there in my pose. And while she, with the expiring afterglow of the smile upon her face, looked at the happy young couples that hurried by us, I said : " It's not nice to laugh. Do you not feel that there is a living, suffering face behind my ridiculous mask—and can't you see that it was only for the opportunity it gave me of seeing you that I put it on ? You gave me reason to hope for your love, and then so quickly, so cruelly deprived me of it. Why did you not come ? "

With a protest on her tender, smiling lips, she turned sharply to me, and a cruel laugh utterly overwhelmed her. Choking, almost weeping, covering her face with a fragrant lace handkerchief, she brought out with difficulty : " Look at yourself in the mirror behind. Oh, how droll you are ! "

Contracting my brows, clenching my teeth with pain, with a face grown cold, from which all the blood had fled, I looked at the mirror. There gazed out at me an idiotically placid, stolidly complacent, inhumanly immovable face. And I burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. And with the laughter not yet subsided, but already with the trembling of rising anger, with the madness of despair, I said—nay, almost shouted :

" You ought not to laugh ! "

And when she was quiet again I went on speaking in a whisper of my love. I had never spoken so well, for I had never loved so strongly. I spoke of the tortures of expectation, of the venomous

tears of mad jealousy and grief, of my own soul which was all love. And I saw how her drooping eyelashes cast a thick dark shadow over her blanched cheeks. I saw how across their dull pallor the fire, bursting into flame, threw a red reflection, and how her whole pliant body involuntarily bent towards me.

She was dressed as the Goddess of Night, and was all mysterious, clad in a black, mist-like lace, which twinkled with stars of brilliants. She was beautiful as a forgotten dream of far-off childhood. As I spoke my eyes filled with tears, and my heart beat with gladness. And I perceived, I perceived at last, how a tender, piteous smile parted her lips, and her eyelashes were lifted all a-tremble. Slowly, timorously, but with infinite confidence, she turned her head towards me, and—

And such a shriek of laughter I never heard!

"No, no, I can't," she almost groaned, and throwing back her head, she burst into a resonant cascade of laughter.

Oh, if but for a moment I could have had a human face! I bit my lips, tears rolled over my heated face; but it—that idiotic mask, on which everything was in its right place, nose, eyes, and lips—looked with a complacency stolidly horrible in its absurdity. And when I went out, swaying on my flowered feet, it was long before I got out of reach of that ringing laugh. It was as though a silvery stream of water were falling from an immense height, and breaking in cheerful song upon the hard rock.

IV

Scattered over the whole sleeping street and rousing the stillness of the night with our lusty, excited voices, we walked home. A companion said to me:

"You have had a colossal success. I never saw people laugh so—— Halloa! what are you up to? Why are you tearing your mask? I say, you fellows, he's gone mad! Look, he's tearing his costume to pieces! By Jove! he's actually crying."

THE WALL

I

I AND another leper cautiously drew near to the very wall, and looked up. From where we stood its top was not visible, but it rose straight and smooth, and as it were bisected the sky. Our half of the sky was dark grey, toned gradually into dark blue on the horizon, so that it was impossible to say where the black earth began, and where the sky ended. The dark night sighed and groaned dull and sad, crushed between the earth and the sky, and with each sigh there spluttered out from her bosom sharp hot grains of sand, which intensified the torture of our burning sores.

"Let us try and climb over," said my companion, and his breath, as he spoke, was loathsome and fœtid, even as my own. He bent his back and I stood on it, but the wall towered as high above us as ever. As it bisected the sky, so it divided the earth, lying on it like a sated boa-constrictor, going down into the abysses and up into the mountains, while its head and its tail stretched beyond the horizon.

"Then, let us pull it down," the leper proposed.

"Let us pull it down," I agreed.

So we threw ourselves with our breasts against the wall, and it became red with the blood of our wounds, but remained dull and immovable as before. We fell into despair.

"Kill us! kill us!" we groaned as we crawled along, and people turned their faces from us in disgust, so that we saw only their backs convulsed with profound loathing.

So we dragged ourselves along, until we met with a man dying of starvation. He was sitting leaning against a stone, and it seemed as though the very granite was sore with the sharpness of his pointed shoulder-blades. There was not an ounce of flesh upon him, and as he moved, his bones rattled and his dry skin crackled. His under jaw was dropped, and from the dark aperture of his mouth there issued a dry, rasping voice:

"I am star—ving."

But we only laughed, and slouched on the faster, till we came upon a quartette who were dancing. They advanced and retired, they took one another by the waist and wheeled round, but their faces were pale, and tortured, and smileless. One of them began to weep, because he was tired of their endless dance, and begged to be allowed to stop; but one of the others, without speaking, gripped him by the waist and whirled him round, and once again he began to advance and retire, and at each step a great troubled tear dropped from his eye.

"I should like to dance," said my companion with a snuffle. But I dragged him away. And once more the wall rose before us, and by it two

persons were squatting on their heels. One of them at regular intervals kept striking his forehead against the wall, and then would fall down insensible. Then the other would regard him seriously, feel with his hand first the man's head and then the wall, and as soon as the other recovered consciousness would say :

" Try again ; there's not much of it left."

And the leper laughed.

" They're fools," said he cheerfully, puffing out his cheeks. " They think that there is light beyond. But it is dark there also, and there too are lepers dragging themselves along, and entreating, ' Kill us ! ' "

" But what about the old man, eh ? " I asked.

" Well ! what of him ? " retorted the leper. " He was indeed a stupid blind and deaf old man. Who could discover the hole he picked through the wall ? Could you ? Could I ? "

I was enraged at this answer, and beat my companion cruelly on his blistered scull, exclaiming :

" Why, then, do you try to climb over it ? "

And he began to weep, and we wept together, and continued on our way, entreating :

" Kill us ! kill us ! "

But faces were shudderingly turned from us, and none was willing to kill us. And yet, they slay the handsome and the strong ; us they are afraid to touch ! The bastards !

II

For us time was not; there was neither yesterday, nor to-day, nor to-morrow. Night never left us, never reposed behind the mountains, so as to return strong, coal-black, and still. Therefore was she always so tired, out of breath, and morose. She was malign. It would come to pass, that she could no longer endure to listen to our sobs and groans, to look upon our sores, our grief and evil case, and then her dark, dully working breast would boil over with a stormy rage. She would roar at us like a mad imprisoned beast, and angrily wink her fearful flaming eyes, which shed a red light on the bottomless pits, on the sombre proudly quiescent wall, and on the miserable group of trembling humanity. They pressed against the wall, as though it were a friend, and entreated it to protect them, but it was ever our enemy—ever. The Night was disgusted at our pusillanimity and cowardice, and burst into angry laughter, which shook her speckled grey paunch, and the bald, ancient mountains caught up that satanic laughter. The wall with grim mirth sonorously re-echoed it, playfully showering stones upon us, breaking our heads and flattening out our bodies. So those great ones made merry, and shouted one to the other, while the wind whistled a wild accompaniment, and we lay prone, and listened in horror, as within the bosom of the earth a tremendous

something kept growling—and will dully keep on so doing—tapping and demanding freedom. Then we all prayed: "Kill us!"

But, though we were dying every second, we were immortal, like the gods.

And there passed by a gust of anger mingled with delight, and the Night, weeping tears of rue, sadly sighed, and like a consumptive spat out upon us damp sand. We with joy forgave her, laughed at her in her exhaustion and weakness, and became jocund as children. The sob of the starving man seemed to us a sweet song, and with cheerful envy we watched the quartette which kept on advancing, and retiring, and floating round in the endless dance.

And pair by pair we ourselves began to whirl round, and I, the leper, found a temporary partner. Oh, it was so cheery, so charming! I put my arm round her, and she laughed, and her little teeth were so milky white, her little cheeks so rosy pink. It was so charming!

One could not understand how it came about, but suddenly her teeth, which were displayed in joyful laughter, began to chatter, our kisses turned to bites, and with a shriek, from which all joy had not yet departed, we fell to gnawing and killing one another. And she of the milk white teeth beat me even on my sick weak head, and stuck her sharp nails into my breast, piercing to the very heart—she smote me, me the leper, the miserable, so miserable. And this was more terrible than the anger of the Night, or the soul-

less laughter of the Wall. And I, the leper, wept and trembled with fear, and quietly, unobserved of any, I kissed the hideous feet of the Wall, and besought it to let me, me alone, pass through into that world where there are no madmen, and where people do not slay one another. But the Wall would not let me through, and then I spat on it, beat it with my fists, and called out:

"Look at this murderess! She is laughing at you."

But my voice was hideous, and my breath fœtid, and no one cared to listen to me—the leper.

III.

And again we crept on, I and the other leper; and again a noise arose around us, and again the quartette circled noiselessly, shaking the dust from their dresses, and licking our bleeding wounds. But we were weary, we were sick, our life was a burden to us. My fellow-traveller sat down, and rhythmically beating the ground with his swollen hands, he jerked out the horrid words :

" Kill us ! kill us ! "

We then jumped with a sudden movement to our feet, and hurled into the crowd ; but they gave way before us, and we saw only their backs. We cursed their backs, and entreated :

" Kill us ! "

But immovable and deaf were the backs, like a second wall. It was so terrible never to see the faces of people, but only their backs—immovable, silent. Now my companion deserted me. He had seen a face—the first face—and it was, even as his own, full of sores and horrible. But it was the face of a woman. And he began to smile and walk round her, stretching out his neck, and diffusing a fœtid odour ; but she too smiled at him with her mouth all fallen-in, and casting down her eyes which had lost the lashes.

And they married one another. And for a moment all faces were turned towards them, and appealing round of laughter shook people's sturdy

bodies. And I, the leper, laughed too: surely it is a stupid thing to get married when one is ugly and sick.

"Fool," said I in derision. "What wilt thou do with her?"

The leper answered with a pompous smile:

"We will deal in stones, which fall from the wall."

"And the children?"

"We will kill them."

How stupid to beget children only to kill them! But then she will soon deceive him; she has such shifty eyes.

IV

They had finished their work—the one who was occupied in knocking his head against the wall, and the other who was helping him. When I arrived there, one of them was hanging by a hook driven into the wall. He was still warm, and the other was quietly singing a cheerful song.

"Go and tell the starving man," said I, and he obeyed, singing as he went. And I saw the starving man struggle up from his stone. Trembling and stumbling, hitting against everything with his sharp elbows, sometimes on all fours, sometimes staggering, he managed to reach the wall, where the man was swinging. His teeth chattered; he laughed gleefully like a child:

"Only a little piece of a foot!" But he was too late; already others, being the stronger, had forestalled him. Pressing one against the other, clawing and biting, they clung round the corpse; they gnawed and munched his feet with relish, and crunched the bones they had worried. But they would not let him have any. He squatted down on his heels, and watched the others as they ate, swallowing with furred tongue, and emitted a prolonged howl from his great empty mouth:

"I am st—ar—ving."

Was it not laughable! He had died for the famished one, and the latter did not get even a piece of his foot! And I laughed, and the other leper laughed, and his wife too winked her crafty eyes in derision.

But he howled only the more loudly and furiously: "I am st—ar—ving."

And the hoarseness went out from his voice, which rose in a pure metallic sound, piercing and clear; and striking against the wall, then reverberating, it flew over the dark abysses and the hoary tops of the mountains.

And presently those, who were near the wall, began to howl; and they were numerous, and as greedy and hungry, as locusts, and it seemed as though the burnt-up earth howled in unbearable tortures, opening wide her stony jaws. It was as though a forest of dried-up trees, bent in one direction by a violent wind, stretched forth their trembling hands to the wall, gaunt, piteous, prayerful; and so great was their despair that the very rocks trembled, and the purple white-capped thunder clouds fled in terror. But the wall remained high and immovable, and unconcernedly re-echoed the moan in multiplied reverberations into the dense fetor-laden atmosphere.

All eyes were turned to the wall, and darted on it fiery rays. They hoped and believed, that it would soon be falling and open out a new world, and in their blind belief began already to see the stones rock, the stone serpent, which had battened on the blood and brains of men, tremble from top to bottom. May-be it was the tremble of the tears in our eyes, which we mistook for the trembling of the wall—and still more piercing was our cry. Anger and exultation at the near approach of victory resounded in it.

V

But this is what happened then. High upon a rock there stood a gaunt old woman, her parched cheeks fallen in, her long locks uncombed like the grey mane of a starving old wolf. Her clothing was in rags, and exposed her yellow, bony shoulders, and her emaciated breasts, which had supported the life of many and been exhausted with maternity. She stretched forth her hands to the wall, and all eyes followed them. She began to speak, and in her voice was so much suffering, that the despairing moans of the starving man were silenced for very shame.

" Give me back my child ! " cried the woman.

And we all kept silence, with a smile of fury upon our lips, and waited for the answer of the wall. The brains of him the woman called " her child " stood out upon the wall in grey patches, streaked with red, and we awaited impatiently and austerely the answer of the dastardly murderess. So still was it that we could hear the rustling of the thunder-clouds passing over our heads, and dark night locked up her groans within her breast, only spitting out with a slight sibilant sound the fine burning sand, which ate into our wounds. Then once more resounded the stern, bitter demand :

" Cruel one ! give me back my child." Ever more stern and furious grew our smile, but the dastardly wall was silent.

And then from the speechless crowd there came forth an old man handsome and austere, and took his stand by the woman.

" Give me back my son," said he.

How terrible it was, and withal how joyous ! A cold shivering went down my spine, and my muscles contracted with the influx of an unknown threatening strength ; but my companion nudged me in the side with chattering teeth, and a fœtid breath in a broad spurning wave issued from his decomposing mouth.

Then there came out from the crowd another person, who said " Give me back my brother ! " And yet another who cried " Give me back my daughter ! "

And then men and women, old and young, began to come forth, and stretching out their hands, shouted their implacable, bitter demand :

" Give me back my child ! "

And then I too, the leper, feeling within me strength and hardihood, stepped forward in my turn, and cried loud and threateningly :

" Murderess ! Give me back my Self ! "

But she—was silent. So false and dastardly was she, that she made as though she heard not, and my seamed cheeks contracted with malignant laughter, and a mad rage filled our sickened hearts. But she, stupidly unconcerned, remained silent !

Then the woman angrily stretched out her lean yellow hands, and yelled implacably :

" Then, be thou damned ! Thou slayer of my child."

And the austere handsome old man repeated :

" Be thou damned ! "

And the whole earth repeated with resonant thousand-throated groan :

" Be thou damned ! damned ! damned ! "

VI

And the black night sighed deeply: and, like a sea upheaved by a hurricane, dashed in all its heavy roaring mass upon the cliffs: the whole visible world rocked and swayed, and with a thousand tense and furious breasts beat against the wall. High to the heavily rolling thunder-clouds was splashed the blood-stained foam, and stained them with red so that they became fiery and terrible, and cast a blood-red reflection down below to where there thundered and roared a low, but wondrously multitudinous, black, and savage Something. With an expiring groan, full of unspoken pain, it rolled back—but the wall stood immovable and silent. But there was no timidity or shame in her silence. Lowering and threateningly calm was the glance of her baleful eyes, and proudly, like a queen, she let fall from her shoulders her purple mantle all adrip with blood, and trailed it amid mutilated corpses.

But dying as we were every second, we were immortal, like the gods.

And once more a mighty stream of human bodies broke out into a roar, and with all their strength hurled themselves against the wall. And again, and over and over again it was rolled back, until fatigue supervened, and a deathlike sleep, and stillness. But I, the leper, was close to the wall, and saw that it began to quake—the proud queen—and

that the fear of falling ran in a shudder through its stones.

"It is falling. Brothers! it is falling," I cried

"Thou art mistaken, leper," replied my brothers.

And then I began to question them:

"Supposing it does stand, what then? Is not every corpse a step towards the top? We are many, and our lives a burden. Let us strew the ground with corpses; upon them let us heap yet other corpses; and so mount to the top. And if there be left but one—he will see a new world."

And I gave a cheerful glance of hope around—and there met it only backs, indifferent, fat and weary. The quartette circled round in endless dance, advancing and retiring, and black night, like an invalid, spat out its moist sand, and the wall stood firm in its indestructible massiveness.

"Brothers!" I entreated; "Brothers!"

But my voice was hideous, and my breath fœtid, and no one would listen to me, the leper.

Woe! woe! woe!

THE FRIEND

When late at night he rang at his own door, the first sound after that of the bell was a resonant dog's bark, in which might be distinguished both fear that it might have been a stranger, and joy that it was his own master, who had arrived.

Then there followed the squish-squash of galoches, and the squeak of the key taken out of the lock.

He came in, and taking off his wrappers in the dark, was conscious of a silent female figure close by, while the nails of a dog caressingly scratched at his knees, and a hot tongue licked his chilled hand.

"Well, what is it?" a sleepy voice asked in a tone of perfunctory interest.

"Nothing! I'm tired," curtly replied Vladímir Mikháïlovitch, and went to his own room. The dog followed him, his nails striking sharply on the waxed floor, and jumped on to the bed. When the light of the lamp, which he lit, filled the room, his glance met the steady gaze of the dog's black eyes. They seemed to say: "Come now, pet me." And to make the request better understood the dog stretched out his fore-paws, and laid his head sideways upon them, while his hinder quarters wriggled comically, and his tail kept twirling round like the handle of a barrel-organ.

" My only friend !' ' said Vladímir Mikháïlovitch, as he stroked the black, glossy coat. As though from excess of feeling the dog turned on his back, showed his white teeth, and growled gently, joyful and excited. But Vladímir Mikháïlovitch sighed, petted the dog, and thought to himself, how that there was no one else in the world that would ever love him.

If he happened to return home early, and not tired out with work, he would sit down to write, and the dog curled himself into a ball on a chair somewhere near to him, opened one black eye now and again, and sleepily wagged his tail. And when excited by the process of authorship, tortured by the sufferings of his own heroes, and choking with a plethora of thoughts and mental pictures, he walked about in his room, and smoked cigarette after cigarette, the dog would follow him with an anxious look, and wag his tail more vigorously than ever.

" Shall we become famous, you and I, Vasyúk?"* He would inquire of the dog, who would wag his tail in affirmation. " We'll eat liver then, is that right ? "

" Right ! " the dog would reply, stretching himself luxuriously. He was very fond of liver.

Vladímir Mikháilovitch often had visitors. Then his aunt, with whom he lived, would borrow china from her neighbour, and give them tea, setting

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* A popular abreviation of Vasily, and an ordinary name for a dog. *Tr.*

on *samovár** after *samovár*. She would go and buy *vodka* and sausages, and sigh heavily as she drew out from her the bottom of pocket a greasy rouble-note. In the room with its smoke-laden atmosphere loud voices resounded. They quarrelled and laughed, said droll and sharp things, complained of their fate and envied one another. They advised Vladímir Mikláilovitch to give up literature, and take to some more lucrative occupation. Some said that he ought to consult a doctor, others clinked glasses with him, while they bewailed the injury that *vodka* was doing to his health. He was so sickly, so continually nervous. This was why he had such fits of depression, and why he demanded of life the impossible. All addressed him as "thou," and their voices expressed their interest in him, and in the friendliest manner, they would invite him to drive beyond the city† with them, and prolong the conviviality. And when he drove off merry, making more noise than the others, and laughing at nothing, there followed him two pairs of eyes: the grey eyes of his aunt, angry and reproachful, and the anxiously caressing black eyes of the dog.

He did not remember what he did, when he had been drinking, and returned home in the morning bespattered with mud and marl, and without his hat.

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* *Samovar* is a Russian urn. It has a pipe going up the centre with a little door at the bottom through which the charcoal is lit. The water is boiled in it outside, then an airtight cover is screwed on, and it is brought into the room. *Tr.*

† Into the country, where there are plenty of beer-gardens. *Tr.*

They would tell him afterwards how in his cups he had insulted his friends; at home had reviled his Aunt, who had wept and said she could not bear such a life any longer, but must do away with herself; and how he had tortured his dog, when he refused to come to him to be petted; and that, when terrified and trembling, he showed his teeth, he had beaten him with a strap.

And the following day all would have finished their day's work before he woke up sick and miserable. His heart would beat unevenly and feel faint, filling him with dread of an early death, while his hands trembled. The other side of the wall, in the kitchen, his Aunt would stump about, the sound of her steps re-echoing through the cold, empty flat. She would not speak to Vladímir Mikháïlovitch; but austere and unforgiving gave him water in silence. And he too would keep silence, looking at the ceiling, at a particular stain long known to him, and thinking how he was wasting his life, and that he would never gain fame and happiness. He confessed to himself that he was weak, worthless and terribly lonesome. The boundless world seethed with moving human beings, and yet there was not one single soul who would come to him and share his pains—madly arrogant thoughts of fame, coupled with a deadly consciousness of worthlessness. With trembling, bungling hand he would grip his forehead, and press his eye-lids, but however firmly he pressed, still the tears would ooze through, and creep down over his cheeks, which still retained the scent of pur-

chased kisses. And when he dropped his hand, it would fall upon another forehead, hairy and smooth, and his gaze, confused with tears would meet the caressing black eyes of the dog, and his ears would catch his soft sighs. And touched and comforted he would whisper :

" My friend, my only friend ! "

When he recovered, his friends used to come to him, and softly reprove him, giving advice and speaking of the evils of drink. But some of his friends, whom he had insulted when drunk, ceased to notice him in the streets. They understood that he did not wish them any harm, but they preferred not to run the risk of further unpleasantnesses. Thus he spent the oppressive fume-laden nights and the sternly avenging sun-lit days at war with himself, his obscurity and loneliness. And ofttimes the steps of his Aunt resounded through the deserted flat, while from the bed was heard a whisper, which resembled a sigh :

" My friend, my only friend ! "

Eventually his illusive fame came, came unguessed at, and unexpected, and filled the empty apartments with light and life. His Aunt's steps were drowned in the tramp of friendly footsteps, and the spectre of loneliness vanished, and the soft whisper ceased. *Vodka*, too, disappeared, that ominous companion of the solitary, and Vladímir Mikháïlovitch ceased to insult his Aunt and his friends.

The dog too was glad. Still louder became his bark on the occasion of their belated meetings,

when his master, his only friend, came home kind, happy, and laughing. The dog himself learnt to smile; his upper lip would be drawn up exposing his white teeth, and his nose would pucker up into funny little wrinkles. Happy and frolicsome he began to play; he would seize hold of things and make as though he would carry them away, and when his matser stretched out his hands to catch him, he would let him approach to within a stride of him, and then run away again, while his black eyes sparkled with artfulness.

Sometimes Vladímir Mikháïlovitch would point to his Aunt and say, "Bite her!" and the dog would fly at her in feigned anger, shake her petticoat, and then, out of breath, glance sideways at his friend with his roguish black eyes. The Aunt's thin lips would be contorted into an austere smile, and stroking the dog, now tired out with play, on his glossy head, would say:

"Sensible dog!—only he does not like soup."

And at night, when Vladímir Mikháïlovitch was at work, and only the jarring of the window-panes, caused by the street traffic, broke the stillness, the dog would doze near to him on the alert, and wake at his slightest movement.

"What, laddie, would you like some liver?" he would ask.

"Yes," would Vasyúk reply, wagging his tail in the affirmative.

"Well, wait a bit, I'll buy you some. What do you want? To be petted? I have no time now, I am busy; go to sleep, laddie!"

Every night he asked the dog about liver, but he continually forgot to buy it, because his head was full of plans for a new work, and of thoughts of a woman he was in love with. Only once did he remember the liver. It was in the evening; he was passing a butcher's shop, arm in arm with a pretty woman who pressed her shoulder close against his. He jokingly told her about his dog, and praised his sense and intelligence. Showing off somewhat, he went on to tell her that there were terrible, distressing moments, when he regarded his dog as his only friend, and laughingly related his promise to buy liver for his friend, when he should have attained happiness—and he pressed the girl's hand closer to him.

"You clever fellow," cried she, laughing; "you would make even stones speak. But I don't like dogs at all: they are so apt to carry infection."

Vladímir Mikháïlovitch agreed that that was the case, and held his tongue with regard to his habit of sometimes kissing that black shiny muzzle.

One day, Vasyúk played more than usual during the daytime, but in the evening, when Vladímir Mikháïlovitch came home, he did not turn up to meet him, and his Aunt said that the dog was ill. Vladímir Mikháïlovitch was alarmed, and went into the kitchen, where the dog lay on a bed of soft litter. His nose was dry and hot, and his eyes were troubled. He made a slight movement of his tail, and looked piteously at his friend

"What is it, boy; ill? My poor fellow!"

The tail made a feeble motion, and the black eyes became moist

"Lie still, then; lie still!"

"He will have to be taken to the veterinary: but to-morrow, I have no time. But it will pass off—" thought Vladímir Mikháïlovitch, and he forgot the dog in thinking of the happiness the pretty girl might give him. All the next day he was away from home. When he returned his hand fumbled long in searching for the bell-handle, and when it was found hesitated long as to what to do with the wooden thing.

"Ah, yes! I must ring," he laughed, and then began singing, "Open—ye!"

The bell gave a solitary ring, galoches squish-squashed, and the key squeaked as it was taken out of the lock.

Vladímir Mikháïlovitch, still humming, passed through into his room, and walked about a long time before it occurred to him that he ought to light the lamp. Then he undressed, but for a long time he kept in his hands the boots he had taken off, and looked at them as though they were the pretty girl, who had only that day said so simply and sincerely, "Yes! I love you!" And when he had got into bed, he still saw her speaking face, until side by side with it there appeared the black shiny muzzle of his dog, and with a sharp pain there crept into his heart the question:

"But where is Vasyúk?"

He became ashamed of having forgotten the sick dog—but not particularly so: for had not

Vasyúk been ill several times before, and nothing had come of it. But to-morrow the veterinary must be sent for. At all events he need not think of the dog, and of his own ingratitude—that would do no good, and would only diminish his own happiness.

When morning came the dog became worse. He was troubled with nausea, and being a well-mannered dog, he rose with difficulty from his litter, and went to the courtyard, staggering like a drunken man. His little black body was sleek as ever, but his head hung feebly, and his eyes, which now looked grey, gazed in mournful surprise.

At first Vladímir Mikháïlovitch himself, with the help of his Aunt opened wide the dog's mouth, with its yellowing gums, and poured in medicine: but the dog was in such pain and suffered so, that it became too distressing to him to look at him, and he left him to the care of his Aunt. And when the dog's feeble, helpless moan penetrated through the wall, he stuffed his fingres into his ears, and was surprised at the extent of his love for this poor dog.

In the evening he went out. Before doing so he gave a look in at the kitchen. His Aunt was on her knees stroking the hot, trembling head with her dry hand.

With his legs stretched out like sticks, the dog lay heavy and motionless, and only by putting one's ear down close to his muzzle could one catch the low, frequent moans.

His eyes, now quite grey, fixed themselves on his master as he came in, and when he carefully passed his hand over the dog's forehead, his groans became clearer and more piteous.

"What, laddie, are you so bad? But wait a bit, when you are well I will buy you some liver."

"I'll make him eat soup!" jokingly threatened the Aunt.

The dog closed his eyes, and Vladímir Mikháïlovitch with a forced joke went out in haste; and when he got into the street he hired a cab, since he was afraid of being late at the rendez-vous with Natáliya Lavréntyevna.

That autumn's evening the air was so fresh and pure, and so many stars twinkled in the dark sky! They kept falling, leaving behind them a fiery track, and burst kindling with a bluish light a pretty girl's face, and were reflected in her dark eyes—as though a glow-worm had appeared at the bottom of a deep dark well. And greedy lips noiselessly kissed those eyes, and those lips fresh as the night air, and those cool cheeks. Voices exultant, and trembling with love, whispered, prattling of joy and life.

When Vladímir Mikháilovitch drove up to his house, he remembered the dog, and his breast ached with a dark foreboding.

When his Aunt opened the door, he asked:

"Well, how's Vasyúk?"

"Dead. He died about an hour after you left."

The dead dog had been already removed to some outhouse, and the litter bed cleared away.

But Vladímir Mikháïlovitch did not even wish to see the body; it would be too distressing a sight. When he lay down in bed, and all noises were stilled in the empty flat, he began to weep restrainedly. His lips puckered up silently, and tears forced their way through his closed eyelids, and rolled quickly down on to his bosom. He was ashamed that he was kissing a woman at the very moment when he, who had been his friend, lay a-dying on the floor alone. And he dreaded what his Aunt would think of him, a serious man, if she heard that he had been crying about a dog.

Much time had elapsed since these events. Mysterious, outrageous fame had left Vladímir Mikháïlovitch just as it had come to him. He had disappointed the hopes that had been built on him, and all were angry at this disappointment, and avenged themselves on him by exasperating remarks and cold jeers. And then they had shut down on him dead, heavy oblivion, like the lid of a coffin.

The young woman had dropped him. She too considered herself taken in.

The oppressive fume-laden nights, and the pitilessly vengeful sun-lit days, went by: and frequently, more frequently than formerly, the Aunt's steps resounded through the empty flat, while he lay on his bed looking at the well-known stain on the ceiling, and whispered:

"My friend, my friend, my only friend!"

And his trembling hand fell feebly on an empty place.

IN THE BASEMENT

I

He drank hard, lost his work and his acquaintances, and took up his abode in a cellar in the company of thieves and unfortunates, living on the last things he had.

His was a sickly, anæmic body, worn out with work, eaten up by sufferings and *vodka*. Death was already on the watch for him, like a grey bird-of-prey blind in the sunshine, sharp eyed in the black night. By day death hid itself in the dark corners, but at night it took its seat noiselessly by his bedside, and sat long, till the very dawn, and was quiet, patient, and persistent. When at the first streak of light he put out his pale head from under the blankets, his eyes gleaming like those of a hunted wild animal, the room was already empty. But he did not trust this deceptive emptiness, which others believe in. He suspiciously looked round into all the corners; with crafty suddenness he cast a glance behind his back, and then leaning upon his elbows he gazed intently before him into the melting darkness of the departing night. And then he saw something, such as ordinary people do not see: the rocking of a monstre grey body, shapeless, terrible. It was transparent, embraced all things, and objects were seen in it as behind a glass wall. But now he

feared it not; and it, leaving behind it a cold impression, departed until the next night.

For a short time he was wrapped in oblivion, and terrible, extraordinary dreams came to him. He saw a white room, with white floor and walls, illumined by a bright white light, and a black serpent which was creeping away under the door with a gentle rustling-like laughter. Pressing its sharp flat head to the floor, it wriggled and quickly glided away, and was lost somewhere or other, and then again its black flattened nose appeared through a crevice under the door, and its body drew itself out in a black ribbon—and so again and again. Once in his sleep he dreamed of something pleasant, and laughed, but the sound seemed strange, and more like a suppressed sob, it was terrible to hear it—his soul somewhere in the unknown depths laughing, or perhaps weeping, while the body lay motionless as the dead.

By degrees the sounds of nascent day began to invade his consciousness: the indistinct talk of passers-by, the distant squeaking of a door, the swish of the *dvornik's* broom as he brushed away the snow from the window-sill—all the undefined bustle of a great city awakening. And then there came upon him the most horrible, mercilessly clear consciousness that a new day had arrived, and that he would soon have to get up, in order to struggle for life without any hope of victory.

One must live.

He turned his back to the light, threw the blanket over his head, so that not the minutest

ray might penetrate to his eyes, squeezed himself together into a small ball, drawing his legs up to his very chin, and so lay motionless, dreading to stir and to stretch out his legs. A whole mountain of clothes lay upon him as a protection against the cold of the basement, but he did not feel their weight, and his body remained cold. And at every sound speaking of life he seemed to himself to be monstrous and unveiled, and he hugged himself together all the tighter, and silently groaned—neither with voice nor in thought—since he feared now his own voice and his own thoughts. He prayed to someone that the day might not come, so that he might always lie under the heap of rags, without movement or thought, and he concentrated his whole will to keep back the coming day, and to persuade himself that it was still night. And more than anything in the world he wished that someone from behind would put a revolver to the back of his head, just at the place where there is a cavity, and blow his brains out.

But daylight unfolded, broad, irresistible, calling forcibly to life, and all the world began to move, to talk, to work, to think. The first in the basement to wake was the landlady, the old Matryóna. She got up from the side of her 25-year-old lover, and began to stamp about the kitchen, clatter with the buckets, and busy herself about something close to Khijhnyakóv's very door. He felt her approach, and lay quiet, determined not to answer if she called him. But she kept silence, and went away somewhere In the course of an

hour or two the two other lodgers woke up, an unfortunate named Dunyásha,* and the old woman's lover Abrám Petróvitch. He was so called in spite of his youth out of respect, because he was a daring and skilful thief, and something else besides, which was guessed at, but not spoken about.

The waking up of these terrified Khijhnyakóv more than anything, since they had a hold on him, and the right to come in and sit on his bed, to touch him, and recall him to thought and speech. He had become intimate with Dunyásha one day when he was drunk, and had promised her marriage, and although she had laughed and slapped him on the back, she sincerely considered him as her lover, and patronized him, although she was herself a stupid, dirty, unwashed slut, who had spent many a night at the police-station. With Abrám Petróvitch he had only the day before yesterday been on the drink, and they had kissed one another and sworn eternal friendship.

When the fresh loud voice of Abrám Petróvitch and his quick steps resounded near the door, Khijhnyakóv's heart's blood curdled with fear and suspense, and he could not help groaning aloud, and then was all the more frightened. In one distinct picture that drinking-bout passed before him: how they had sat in some dark tavern or other, illumined by a single lamp, amid dark people

* Short for Evdokíya, vulg. Avdôtya. *Tr.*

who kept whispering together about something, while they themselves also whispered together. Abrám Petróvitch was pale and excited, and complained of the hardships of a thief's life; for some reason or other he had bared his arms and allowed him to feel the badly-mended bones of his once broken arm, and Khijhnyakóv had kissed him and said:

"I love thieves, they are so bold," and proposed to him that they should drink to "brotherhood," although they had for long been on quite intimate terms.

"And I love you, because you are educated, and understand us so well," replied Abrám Petróvitch.

"Look again at my arm; here it is, eh?"

And again the white arm had passed before his eyes, seeming to be sorry for its own whiteness, and suddenly realising something (which he did not now remember or understand), he had kissed that arm, and Abrám Petróvitch had proudly cried:

"Indeed, brother, death before surrender!"

And then something dirty whirling round and round, howls, whistles, and jumping lights. Then he had felt cheerful, but now when death was hiding in the corners, and when day was rushing in upon him from every direction with the inexorable necessity to live and do something, to struggle after something and ask for something—he felt tortured and inexpressibly frightened.

"Are you asleep sir,?" Abrám Petróvitch en-

quired sarcastically through the door, and receiving no answer, added :

" Well, then, sleep away ; devil take you ! "

Many acquaintances visited Abrám Petróvitch, and throughout the day the door squeaked on its hinges, and bass voices were to be heard. And it seemed to Khijhnyakóv, at every sound, that they were coming for him, and he buried himself the deeper in his bed-clothes, and listened long to catch to whom the voice belonged. He waited and waited in agony, trembling all over his body, although there was no one in the whole world who would come to fetch him.

He had once had a wife—long ago—but she was dead. Still further back in the past he had had brothers and sisters, and still earlier—something indistinct and beautiful, which he called Mother. All these were dead, or possibly some one of them might be still alive, only so lost in the wide, wide world, that he was as though dead. And he himself would soon be dead too—he knew it. When he should get up to-day his legs would tremble and give way under him, and his hands would make uncertain strange motions—and this was death. But meanwhile he must needs live, and that is such a serious task for a man who has neither money, health, nor will, that Khijhnyakóv was seized with despair. He threw off his blanket, clasped his hands, and breathed out into the void such prolonged groans, that they seemed to proceed from a thousand suffering breasts, therefore was it that they were so full, brimming over with insupportable torture.

"Open, you devil!" cried Dunyásha from the other side of the door, pounding it with her fists. "Or I'll break the door down!"

Trembling with tottering steps, Khijhnyakóv reached the door, opened it, and quickly lay down again, nay almost fell, on his bed. Dunyásha already befrizzled and bepowdered, sat down at his side, shoving him against the wall, and crossing her legs, said with an air of importance:

"I have brought you news. Kátya expired yesterday."

"What Kátya?" asked Khijhnyakóv, using his tongue clumsily and uncertainly, as though it did not belong to him.

"Come, now, you can't have forgotten!" laughed Dunyásha. "The Kátya who used to live here. How can you have forgotten her, when she has been gone only a week?"

"Died?"

"Why, of course died, as all die." Dunyásha moistened the tip of her little finger and wiped the powder from her thin eyelashes.

"What of?"

"What all die of. Who knows what? They told me yesterday at the café, Kátya was dead."

"Did you love her?"

"Certainly I loved her! What are you talking about!"

Dunyásha's stupid eyes looked at Khijhnyakóv in dull indifference as she swung her fat leg. She did not know what more to say, and tried to look at him, as he lay there, in such a manner as to

show to him her love, and with that intent she gently winked her eye, and dropped the corners of her full lips.

The day had begun.

II

That day, a Saturday, the frost was so severe that the boys did not go to school, and the horse-races were postponed for fear of the horses' catching cold. When Natálya Vladímirovna came out from the lying-in hospital, she was for the first moment glad that it was evening, that there was no one on the embankment, that none met her—an unmarried girl, with a six-day-old child in her arms. It had seemed to her that, as soon as she should cross the threshold, she would be met by a shouting, hissing crowd, among whom would be her senile, paralytic, and almost blind father, her acquaintances, students, officers and their young ladies; and that all these would point the finger at her and cry:

"There goes a girl who has passed through six classes at the high-school, had acquaintances among the students both intellectual and of good birth, who used to blush at a word spoken unadvisedly, and who six days ago gave birth to a child, in the lying-in hospital, side by side with other fallen women."

But the embankment was deserted. Along it the icy wind travelled unrestrained, lifted a grey cloud of snow, ground by the frost into a biting dust, and covered with it everything living and dead which met it in its path. With a gentle whistle it wove itself round the metal pillars of the railings, so that they shone again, and looked

so cold and lonely that it was a pain to look at them. And the girl felt herself to be just such a cold thing, an outcast from mankind and life. She had on a little short jacket, the one which she usually wore skating, and which she had hurriedly thrown on when she left her home suffering the premonitory pains of childbirth. And when the wind seized her, and wrapped her thin skirt about her ankles, and chilled her head, she began to fear that she might be frozen to death; and her fear of a crowd disappeared, and the world expanded into a boundless icy wilderness, in which was neither man, nor light, nor warmth. Two burning tear-drops gathered in her eyes, and froze there. Bending her head down, she wiped them away with the formless bundle she was carrying, and went on faster. Now she no longer loved herself nor the child, and both lives seemed to her worthless; only certain words, which had, as it were, sunk into her brain, persistently repeated themselves, and went before her calling:

"Nyemtchínovskaya Street, the second house from the corner. Nyemtchínovskaya Street, the second house from the corner."

These words she had repeated for six days as she lay on the bed and fed her infant. They meant, that she must go to Nyemtchínovskaya Street, where her foster-sister, an unfortunate, lived, because only with her, and with no one else, could she find an asylum for herself and her child. A year ago, when all was still well, and

she was continually laughing and singing, she had visited Kátya, who was ill, and had helped her with money, and now she was the only human being remaining before whom she was not ashamed.

"Nyemtchínovskaya Street, the second house from the corner. Nyemtchínovskaya Street, the second house from the corner."

She walked on, and the wind whirled angrily round her; and when she came upon the bridge it greedily dashed at her bosom, and dug its iron nails into her cold face. Vanquished, it dropped noisily from the bridge, and circled along the snow-covered surface of the river, and again swept upwards, overshadowing the road with cold, trembling wings. Natálya Vladímirovna stood still, and in utter weakness leaned against the rail. From the depth below there looked up at her a dull black eye—a spot of unfrozen water—and its gaze was mysterious and terrible. But before her resounded and called persistently the words:

"Nyemtchínovskaya Street, the second house from the corner. Nyemtchínovskaya Street, the second house from the corner."

Khjhnyakóv dressed, and lay down again on his bed rolled to the very eyes in a warm overcoat, his sole remaining possession. The room was cold, there was ice in the corners, but he breathed into the astrakhan collar, and so became warm and comfortable. The whole day long he kept deceiving himself, that to-morrow he would go and seek work, and ask for something; but meanwhile he was content not to think at all, but merely to

tremble at the sound of a raised voice the other side of the wall, or at the sound of a sharply slammed door. He had lain long in this way, perfectly still, when at the entrance door he heard an uneven rapping, timid, and yet hurried and sharp, as if someone was knocking with the back of the hand. His room was the one next to the entrance door, and by craning his head and pricking up his ears he could distinguish everything which took place near it. Matryóna went to the door and opened it, let someone in and closed it again. Then followed an expectant silence.

" Whom do you want ? " asked Matryóna in a hoarse, unfriendly tone. A stranger's voice, gentle and broken, bashfully replied :

"I want Kátya Nyetchayeva. She lives here ? "

" She did. But what do you want with her ? "

" I want her very badly. Is she not at home ? " and in her voice there was a note of fear.

" Kátya is dead. She died, I say—in the hospital."

Again there was a long silence, so long indeed that Khijhnyakóv felt a pain in his back ; but he did not dare to move it, while the people there kept silence.

Then the stranger's voice pronounced gently, and without expression, the one word :

" Good-bye ! "

But evidently she did not go away, since in the course of a minute Matryóna asked : " What have you there ? Have you brought something for Kátya ? "

Someone knelt down, striking her knees on the floor, and the stranger's voice, convulsed with suppressed sobs, uttered quickly the words :

" Take it, take it ! For the love of God, take it ! And then I—I'll go away."

" But what is it ? "

Again there was a long silence, and then a gentle weeping, broken, and hopeless. There was in it a deadly weariness, and a black despair, without a single gleam of hope. It was as though a hand had impotently drawn the bow across the over-tightened, the last remaining, string of an expensive instrument, and when the string snapped the soft wailing note had been silenced for ever.

" Why, you have nearly smothered it ! " exclaimed Matryóna in a rough, angry tone. " You see what sort of people undertake to bear children. How could you do it ? Whoever would wrap up babies like that ? Come now, come along ; do, I say. How could you do such a thing ? "

Once more all was silent near the door.

Khijhnyakóv listened a little longer and then lay down, delighted that no one had come to fetch him, and not taking the trouble to guess the truth about what he had not understood in that which had just taken place. He began already to feel the approach of night, and wished that someone would turn the lamp up higher. He became restless, and, clenching his teeth, he endeavoured to restrain his thoughts. In the past there was nothing but mire, falls, and horror, and—there was the same horror in the future. He was just beginning by degrees to

snuggle himself together, and draw up his hands and feet, when Dunyásha came in, dressed to go out in a red blouse, and already slightly intoxicated. She plopped down on the bed, and said with a gesture of surprise:

"Oh Lord!" She shook her head and smiled. "They have brought a little baby here. Such a tiny one, my friend, but he shouts just like a police-inspector.* By God, just like a police-inspector!"

She swore whimsically, and coquettishly flipped Khijhnyakóv's nose.

"Let's go and see. Why not, indeed! Yes, we'll just take a look at him. Matryóna is going to bath it; she is boiling the *samovár*. Abrám Petróvitch is blowing up the charcoal with his boot. How funny it all is. And the baby is crying: 'Wa, wa, wa!'"

Dunyásha made a face which she meant to represent the baby, and again went on puling: "'Wa, wa, wa!' Just like a police-inspector, by God! Let's go. Don't you want to?—well, then devil take you! Turn up your toes where you are, rotten egg,† you!"

And she danced out of the room. But half an hour after Khijhnyakóv, tottering on his weak legs and hanging on to the doorposts, hesitatingly opened the door of the kitchen.

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* The Russian police-inspector, unlike his dignified British *confrere*, is proverbial for shouting at the top of his voice upon every conceivable occasion. *Tr.*

† The Russian idiom is "frost-bitten apple." *Tr.*

"Shut it! you've made a draught," cried Abrám Petróvitch.

Khijhnyakóv hastily slammed the door behind him, and looked round apologetically; but no one took any notice of him, so he calmed down. The combined heat of the stove, the urn, and the company made the kitchen pretty warm, and the vapour rose, and then rolled down the colder walls in thick drops. Matryóna with a severe and irritated mien was washing the child in a trough, and with pock-marked hands was splashing the water over him, while she crooned:

"Little lambkin, then, it s'all be clean. It s'all be white."

Whether it was because the kitchen was light and cheerful, or because the water was warm and caressing, at all events the child was quiet, and wrinkled up its little red face as though about to sneeze. Dunyásha looked at the tub over Matryóna's shoulder, and seizing her opportunity, splashed the little one with three fingers.

"Get away!" the old woman cried in a threatening tone, "where are you coming to? I know what to do without your help. I have had children of my own."

"Don't meddle. She's quite right, children are such tender things," said Abrám Petróvitch, in support of her; "they want some handling."

He sat down on the table, and with condescending satisfaction contemplated the little rosy body. The baby wriggled its fingres, and Dunyásha with wild delight wagged her head and laughed.

"Just like a police-inspector, s'welp me Bob!"

"But have you seen a police-inspector in a trough?" asked Abrám Petróvitch.

All luaghed, and even Khijhnyakóv smiled; but almost immediately the smile left his face in affright, and he looked round at the mother. She was sitting wearily on the bench, with her head thrown back, and, her black eyes, abnormally large from sickness and suffering, lighted up with a peaceful gleam, and on her pale lips hovered the proud smile of a mother. And when he saw this Khijhyakóv burst into a solitary, belated laugh:

"He! he! he!"

He even looked proudly round on all sides. Matryóna took the baby out of the tub, and wrapped it in a bath-sheet. The child burst into loud crying, but was soon quieted again, and Matryóna, unrolling the sheet, smiled in confusion and said:

"What a dear little body, just like velvet."

"Let me feel," entreated Dunyásha.

"What next!"

Dunyásha began suddenly to tremble all over, and stamped her feet; choking with longing, and mad with the desire, which overwhelmed her, she cried in such a shrill voice as none had ever heard from her:

"Let me! let me!"

"Yes, let her," entreated Natálya Vladímirovna in a fright. And Dunyásha just as suddenly became quiet again. She cautiously touched the child's little shoulder with two fingers, and following

her example, Abrám Petróvitch, with a condescending wink, also reached out to that little red shoulder.

"Yes, indeed, children are tender things," said he in self-justification.

Last of all Khijhnyakóv tried it. His fingers felt for a moment the touch of something living, downy like velvet, and withal so tender and feeble that his fingers seemed no longer to belong to him, and became as tender as the something he touched. And thus, craning their necks, and unconsciously lighting up into a smile of strange happiness, stood the three, the thief, the prostitute, and the lonely broken man, and that little life, feeble as a distant light on the steepe, was vaguely calling them somewhither, and promising them something beautiful, bright, immortal. And the happy mother looked proudly on, while above the low ceiling the house rose in a heavy mass of stone, and in the upper flats the rich sauntered about, and yawned with ennui.

Night had come on, black, malign, as all nights are, and had pitched her tent in darkness over the distant snowy fields; and the lonely branches of trees became chilled with fear, just those branches which first welcomed the morning sun. With feeble artificial light man fought against her, but strong and malign she girded the isolated lights in a hopeless circle, and filled the hearts of men with darkness. And in many a heart she extinguished the feeble flickering sparks.

Khijhnyakóv did not sleep. Huddled up together into a little ball, he hid himself under a

soft heap of rags from the cold and from the night, and wept, without effort, without pain or convulsion, as those weep whose heart is pure and without sin, as the heart of a little child. He pitied himself huddled up into a heap, and it seemed to him that he pitied all mankind and the whole of human life, and in this feeling there was a secret, profound gladness. He saw the child, just born, and it seemed to him that he himself was reborn to a new life, and would live long, and that his life would be beautiful. He loved and yet pitied this new life, and he felt so happy, that he laughed so that he shook the heap of rags, and then asked himself:

"Why am I weeping?"

But he could not discover the answer to his own question, and so replied:

"So!"

And such a profound thought was conveyed by this short word, that this wreck of a man, whose life was so pitiable and lonely, was convulsed with a fresh burst of scalding tears.

But at his bedside rapacious death was noiselessly taking its seat, and waiting—quietly, patiently, persistently.

THE CITY

It was an immense city in which they lived: Petróv, clerk in a commercial bank, and he, the other,—name unknown.

They used to meet once a year, at Easter, when they both went to pay a visit at one and the same house, that of the Vasilyévskys. Petróv used to pay a visit also at Christmas, but probably the other, whom he used to meet, came at Christmas at a different hour, and so they did not see one another. The first two or three times Petróv did not notice him among so many visitors, but the fourth year his face seemed known to him and they greeted one another with a smile—and the fifth year Petróv proposed to clink glasses with him.

"Your health!" he said politely, and held out his glass.

"Here's to yours!" the other replied with a smile, and he too held out his glass.

Petróv did not think of asking his name, and when he went out into the street he quite forgot his existence, and the whole year never thought of him again. Every day he went to the bank, where he had been employed for nine years; in the winter he occasionally went to the theatre; in the summer he visited at the bungalow of an acquain-

tance; and twice he was ill with the influenza—the second time immediately before Easter.

And just as he was mounting the stairs at the Vasilyévskys', in evening dress and with his opera-hat under his arm, he remembered that he would see him there, the other, and felt very much surprised that he could not in the least recall his face and figure. Petróv himself was below the average height and somewhat round-shouldered, so that many took him for a hunchback; he had large black eyes with yellowish whites. In other respects he did not differ from the rest, who paid a visit to the Vasilyévskys twice a year, and when they forgot his surname they used to speak of him as the "little hunchback."

He, the other, was already there, and on the point of going away; but when he recognised Petróv, he smiled politely, and remained. He was also in evening dress and had an opera-hat, and Petróv failed to examine him further, since he was occupied with talking, and eating, and drinking tea.

They went out together, and helped one another on with their coats, like friends: they politely made way the one for the other, and each gave the porter a half-rouble. They stood still a short time in the street, and then he, the other, said:

"Well, tipping's become a regular tax. But it can't be helped."

Petróv replied:

"Yes, quite true."

And since there was nothing more to be said,

they smiled in a friendly manner, and Petróv said :

" Which way are you going ? "

" I turn to the left. And you ? "

" I to the right."

In the cab Petróv remembered that he had again failed either to ask his name, or to observe him particularly. He turned round : carriages were passing in both directions, the pavements were black with pedestrians, and in that closely moving mass it was as impossible to distinguish him, the other, as to find a particular grain of sand amongst other grains. And again Petróv forgot him, and did not think of him again for a whole year.

Petróv had lived for many years in the same furnished apartments, and he was not much liked there, because he was grumpy and irritable ; and they also called him behind his back, " Humpty." He used often to sit in his apartment alone, and none knew what work he did, since Fedót,* the upstairs servant, did not look on books and letters as " work." At night Petróv sometimes went for a walk, and Iván the porter could not understand these walks, since Petróv always returned sober, and—alone.

But Petróv used to walk about at night, because he was very much afraid of the city in which he lived, and he feared it more than ever in the daytime, when the streets were full of people.

The city was immense and populous, and there was in its populousness and immensity something

* Theodotus. *Tr.*

stubborn, unconquerable, and callously cruel. With the collossal weight of its bloated stone houses, it crushed the earth on which it stood; and the streets between the houses were narrow, crooked, and deep like fissures in a rock. It seemed as though they were all seized with a panic of fear, and were endeavouring to run away from the centre* to the open country, and that they could not find the road, and losing their way had rolled themselves in a ball like a serpent, and were intersecting one another, and looking back in hopeless despair.

One might walk for hours about these streets, which seemed broken-down, choked, and faint with a terrible convulsion, and never emerge from the line of fat stone houses. Some high, others low, some flushed with the cold thin blood of new bricks, others painted with a dark or light colour, they stood in unswaying solidity on both sides, callously met, and personally conducted one, and pressing together in a dense crowd, in this direction and in that, lost their individuality and become like one another—and the walker grew frightened: it was as though he had become rooted to the spot, and the houses kept going past him in an endless truculent file.

Once Petróv was walking quietly about the street, when suddenly he felt what a thickness of stone houses separated him from the wide, open country, where the free earth breathed softly in the sunshine, and man's eyes might look round to the distant horizon.

* This is a characteristic of Moscow. *Tr.*

It seemed to him that he was suffocating and being blinded, and he felt a desire to run and get quickly out from the stony embrace—and it became a horror to him to think, however fast he might run, still houses, ever houses, would go with him on both sides, and he would be suffocated before he could run beyond the city. Petróv ensconced himself in the first restaurant he came across, but even there he seemed for a long time to be suffocating; so he drank cold water, and wiped his eyes with his handkerchief.

But the most terrible thing of all was, that in all the houses there lived human beings, and about all the streets were moving human beings. There was a multitude of them, and all of them were unknown to him—strangers; and all of them lived their own separate life, hidden from the eyes of others; they were without interruption being born, and dying, and there was no beginning nor end to this stream. Whenever Petróv went to the bank, or out for a walk, he saw the same familiar, well-known houses, and everything appeared to him simply an old acquaintance; if, however, he stood still, but for a moment, to fix his attention on some face, then all was quickly and terribly changed. With a feeling of terror and impotence Petróv would look at all the faces, and understand that he saw them for the first time, that yesterday he had seen other people, and to-morrow would see yet others; and so always, every day, and every minute, he would see new, unknown faces. There was a stout gentleman, at whom Petróv

glanced, disappearing round the corner—and never would Petróv see him again. Even if he wished to find him, he might search for him all his life, and never succeed.

And Petróv feared the immense, callous city.

This year again Petróv had the influenza, very severely with a complication, and he was frequently afflicted with a cold in the head.

Moreover, the doctor found that he had catarrh of the stomach, and the next Easter, as he was going to the Vasilyévskys', he thought on the way of what he should eat there. When he recognized him, the other, he was pleased and informed him:

"My dear sir, I have a catarrh."

He, the other, shook his head sympathetically, and replied:

"You don't say so!"

And once more Petróv did not enquire his name, but he began to look upon him as quite an old acquaintance, and thought of him with pleasurable feelings. "Him" he named him, but when he wanted to recall his face, he could only conjure up an evening coat, white waistcoat, and a smile; and since he could not in the least recollect the face, it inevitably appeared as though the coat and waistcoat smiled. That summer Petróv went out very frequently to a certain bungalow, wore a red neck-tie, dyed his moustache, and said to Fedót that in the autumn he should change his quarters; but afterwards he gave up going to the bungalow, and took to drink for a whole month. He managed his drinking clumsily—with tears and scenes.

Once he broke the mirror in his room ; another time he frightened a certain lady. He invaded her apartment in the evening, fell on his knees and proposed to her. This fair unknown was a courtesan, and at first listened to him attentively and even laughed, but when he began to weep and complain of his loneliness, she took him for a madman, and began to scream with terror. As they led him away, supporting himself against Fedot, he pulled his hair and cried :

" We are all men, all brethren ! "

They had decided to get rid of him ; but he gave up drinking, and once more the porter swore at having to open and shut the door for him. At New Year Petróv received an increase of 100 roubles *per annum*, and he changed into a neighbouring apartment, which was five roubles dearer, and had windows looking into the courtyard. Petróv thought that there he would not hear the rumbling of the street traffic, and might even forget what a multitude of unknown strangers surrounded him, and lived their own particular lives in proximity to him.

In the winter it was quiet in his rooms, but when spring came, and the snow was removed from the streets, the rumble of the traffic began again, and the double walls were no protection from it.

In the daytime, while he was occupied with something, and himself moved about and made a noise, he did not notice the rumbling, though it never ceased for a moment ; but when night came

on and all became quiet in the house, then the noisy street forced its way into the dark chamber, and deprived it of all quiet and privacy. The jarring and disjointed sounds of individual vehicles were heard; an indistinct, slight sound would come to life somewhere in the distance, grow louder and clearer, and by degrees die down again, and in it's place would be heard a new one, and so on and on without intermission. Sometimes only the hoofs of the horses struck the ground evenly and rhythmically, and there was no sound of wheels—this was when a caléche went by on rubber tyres; but often the noise of individual vehicles would blend into a terrible loud rumble, which made the stone walls tremble slightly, and set the bottles vibrating in the cupboard. And all this was caused by human beings! They sat in hired and private carriages, they drove no one knew whence or whither, they disappeared into the unknown depth of the immense city, and in their place appeared fresh people, other human beings, and there was no end to this incessant movement, so terrible in its incessancy. And every passer-by was a separate microcosm, with his own rules and aims of life, with his own affinity, whom he loved, with his own separate joys and sorrows, and each was like a ghost, which appeared for a moment, and then disappeared inexplicably and unrecognized. And the more people there were, who were unknown to one another, the more terrible became the solitude of each. And during those black, rumbling nights,

Petróv often felt inclined to cry out in fear, and to betake himself to the deep cellar, in order to be there perfectly alone. There one might think only of those one knew, and not feel oneself so infinitely alone among a multitude of strange people.

At Easter, he, the other, did not turn up at the Vasilyévskys', and Petróv did not observe his absence until the end of his call, when he had begun to make his adieux, and failed to meet the well-known smile. And he felt a disquiet at heart, and suddenly was conscious of a painful longing to see him, the other, and to say something to him about his loneliness and his nights. But he had only a very slight recollection of the man, whom he sought: only that he was of middle age, fair apparently, and always in evening dress; but by this description the Vasilyévskys could not guess of whom he was speaking.

"So many people pay us a visit on Festivals, that we do not know the surnames of all," said Madame. "However——was it Syómenov?"

And she counted one by one on her fingers several surnames: "Smírnov, Antónov, Nikiphórov;" and then without the surname: "The bald man, in the civil service, the post office I think; the one with the light brown hair; the one quite grey." And none of them were the one, after whom Petróv was inquiring—though they might have been. And so he was not discovered.

This year nothing particular happened in the life of Petróv, except that his eye-sight deteriorated, and he had to take to glasses. At night, when the

weather was fine, he went walking, and chose the quiet, deserted bye-streets for his perigrinations. But even there people were to be met, whom he had never seen before, and never would see again ; and the houses towered on either side in a dull wall, and inside they were full of persons utterly unknown to him, who slept, and talked, and quarelled : someone was dying behind those walls, and close to him a fresh human being was coming into the world, to be lost for a time in it's ever-moving infinity, and then to die for ever. In order to console himself, Petróv would count over all his acquaintances ; and their neighbourly familiar faces were like a wall, which separated him from infinity. He endeavoured to remember all ; the porters, shop-keeper, cabmen that he knew, also passers-by whom he casually remembered ; and at first he seemed to know very many people, but when he began to count them up, the number became terribly small : all his life long he had only known 250 people, including him, the other. And these were all who were known and neighbourly to him in the world. Possibly there were people whom he had known, and forgotten ; but that was just the same, as though they did not exist.

He, the other, was very glad, when he recognized Petróv the next Easter. He had a new dress suit on, and new boots which creaked, and he said as he pressed Petróv's hand :

" But, you know, I almost died. I was seized with inflammation of the lungs, and even now

there is there"—and he tapped himself on the side—"something the matter with the upper part, I believe."

"I'm sorry for you," said Petróv with sincere sympathy.

They talked about various ailments, and each spoke of his own, and when they separated they did so with a prolonged pressure of the hand, but they quite forgot to ask each other's name. The following Easter it was Petróv who did not put in an appearance at the Vasilyévskys', and he, the other, was much disquieted, and enquired of Mrs. Vasilyévsky who the little hunchback was who visited them.

"I know what his surname is," said she, "it is Petróv."

"But what are his Christian name and his father's?"

Mrs. Vasilyévsky would willingly have told his name, but it seems she did not know it, and was very much surprised at the fact. Neither did she know in what office Petróv was, perhaps the post office or some bank.

The next time he, the other, did not appear.

The time after both came, but at different hours, so they did not meet. And then they altogether left off putting in an appearance, and the Vasilyévskys never saw them again, and did not even give them a thought; for so many people visited them, and they could not possibly remember them all.

The immense city grew still bigger, and there, where the broad fields had stretched, irrepressible

new streets lengthened out, and on both sides of them stout, vary-coloured stone houses crushed heavily the ground on which they stood. And to the seven cemeteries, which had before existed in the city, was added a new one, the eighth. In it there was no greenery at all, and meanwhile they buried in it only paupers.

And when the long autumn night drew on, it became still in the cemetery, and there reached it only in distant echoes the rumbling of the street traffic, which ceased not day nor night.

THE MARSEILLAISE

He was a nonentity, with the soul of a hare and the shameless endurance of a beast of burden. When the malicious irony of fate cast his lot in among our black ranks, we laughed like maniacs at the thought that such absurd inept mistakes could actually be made. As for him, well—he cried. And never have I met with a man of so many tears, flowing so freely—from eyes and nose and mouth. He was like a sponge saturated with water, and then squeezed. In our ranks I have seen, indeed, men who wept, but then their tears were fire, from which even fierce wild beasts would run away. These manly tears aged the faces, but made the eyes young again. Like lava released from the red-hot bowels of the earth, they burnt an indelible track, and buried under themselves whole cities of worthless devices and shallow cares. But when this fellow began to weep, only his nose grew red, and his handkerchief became wet. Probably he used to hang out his handkerchiefs on a line to dry; how otherwise could he have supplied himself with so many?

During the whole time of exile he was continually applying to the authorities, real and imaginary, bowing, and weeping, and swearing that he was

innocent, entreating them to have pity upon his youth, and promising all his life never to open his mouth except in petition and gratitude. But they laughed at him, even as did we, and called him "the wretched little pig," and would call out to him:

"Piggy, come here!"

And he would obediently run to their cell, expecting each time to hear news of his restoration to his native land. But they were only joking. They knew, as well as we did, that he was innocent. But they thought by his torments to intimidate other little pigs, as though they were not cowardly enough already. He would also come to us, impelled by an animal dread of solitude. But our faces were stern, and locked against him, and in vain he sought for the key. At an utter loss what to do, he would call us his dear comrades and friends. But we would shake our heads and say:

"Look out! Someone will hear you!"

And he was not ashamed to glance round at the door—the little pig!

Well! Could we possibly contain ourselves? No, we laughed with mouths long accustomed to laughter. Then he, emboldened and comforted, would sit down nearer to us, and converse, and weep about his dear books, which he had left upon the table, and about his mamma and little brothers, of whom he did not know whether they were alive, or dead of fear and grief.

Towards the end we refused to associate with

him any longer. When the hunger-strike* began he was seized with terror—the most inexpressibly comical terror. He was evidently very fond of his stomach, poor little pig, and he was terribly afraid of his dear comrades, and also of the authorities. He wandered about among us in a state of perturbation, continually passing his handkerchief over his forehead, upon which something had exuded—was it tears or perspiration? Then he asked me in an irresolute manner:

"Shall you starve long?"

"For a long time," I sternly replied

"But will you not eat anything on the sly?"

"Our mammas will send us pies," I acquiesced in all seriousness. He looked at me in doubt, nodded his head and went away with a sigh. The next day, green as a parroquet with fear, he answered:

"Dear comrades! I also will starve with you."

We replied with one voice: "Starve by yourself!"

And he did starve! We did not believe it, just as you will not believe it: we thought that he ate something on the sly, and so too thought our guards. And when towards the end of the strike he fell ill of famine-typhus, we only shrugged our shoulders and said:

"Poor little Pig!"

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* It is, alas, no longer necessary to explain to the English reader the meaning of this term, since certain hysterical women, illtreated by an unmannerly Government, have been sufficiently lacking in originality to introduce the silly custom into this country. *Tr.*

But one of us—he who never laughed—said grimly: "He is our comrade, let us go to him."

He was delirious, and his incoherent ravings were as piteous as the whole of his life. He talked of his dear books, of his mamma and brothers; he asked for tarts, cold as ice, tasty tarts; and he swore that he was innocent, and begged for pardon. He called on his native country—his dear France, and damn the weakness of the human heart! he rent our souls with that cry of "Dear France."

We were all in the room when he lay a-dying. He recovered his consciousness before death, and silent he lay, so small, so weak; and silent stood we his comrades. We all to a man heard him say: "When I am dead sing over me the Marseillaise."

"What does thou say?" we exclaimed, with a shock of mingled joy and rising anger.

He repeated: "When I am dead sing over me the Marseillaise."

And it happened for the first time that his eyes were dry, but we wept, wept one and all: and our tears burned like fire from which fierce wild-beasts do flee.

He died, and we sang over him the Marseillaise. With lusty young voices we sang that great song of freedom; and threateningly the ocean re-echoed it to us, and the crests of its waves bore to his dear France pale terror, and blood-red hope.

And he became ever our watchword, that

nonentity with the body of a hare, and of a beast of burden—but with the great soul of a man! On your knees, comrades and friends!

We sang! At us the rifles were aimed, while their locks clicked ominously, and the sharp points of the bayonets were menacingly turned towards our hearts. But ever louder and more joyfully resounded the threatening song, while the black coffin swayed in the tender hands of stalwarts.

We sang the Marseillaise!

PYET'KA AT THE BUNGALOW

'Osip* Abrámovitch, the barber, arranged a dirty sheeting on his customer's chest, and tucking it into his collar, shouted abruptly in a sharp tone, "Boy! water!"

The customer, examining his face in the glass with that sharpened intentness and interest which is exhibited only at the barber's, observed that another pimple had appeared on his chin, and turning his eyes away in dissatisfaction they fell straight on a thin little hand, which stretched out from somewhere at the side, and put a tin of hot water down on the ledge below the looking-glass. When he raised his eyes still higher, they caught the strange and distorted looking reflection of the barber, and he noticed the sharp threatening glance which he was casting down on the head of someone, and the silent movements of his lips, caused by an inaudible but expressive whisper. If the master himself was not doing the shaving but one of the assistants, Prokópy or Mikháïlo, then the whisper would become loud, and take the form of a vague threat:

"Just, you wait!"

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* Pyét'ka, *i.e.* Peterkin; t' is soft. Dâtcha is a summer residence n the neighbourhood of a city. I have rendered it "bungalow." 'Osip is colloquial for Yôsif. *Tr.*

This meant that the boy was not quick enough with the water, and that punishment awaited him. "Serve'm right too," thought the customer, bending his head down sideways, and contemplating the great moist hand by the side of his nose, three fingers of which were spread out, while the forefinger and thumb, all sticky and smelly, gently touched cheek and chin as the blunt razor, with a disagreeable grating noise, took off the lather, and with it the stiff bristles of his beard.

At this barber's shop, permeated with the oppressive smell of cheap scents, full of tiresome flies and of dirt, the customers were not very exacting. they consisted of hall-porters, overseers, and sometimes minor officials, or workmen, and often coarsely handsome but suspicious-looking fellows with ruddy cheeks, slender moustaches, and insolent oleaginous eyes.

Close by was a quarter full of houses of cheap debauchery. They lorded it over the whole neighbourhood, and gave to it a special character of something dirty, disorderly and disquieting.

The boy, who was called out to most frequently, was named Pyét'ka, and was the smallest of all who served in the establishment. The other boy Nikólka was his elder by three years, and would soon develop into an assistant. Now already, when a more than ordinarily humble customer looked in, and the assistants in the absence of the master were too lazy to work, they would set Nikólka to cut his hair, and laugh when he had to raise himself on tiptoe to see the back hair of

some fat *dvórnik.** Sometimes the customer would be offended at his hair's being badly cut, and utter a loud complaint, and then the assistants would scold Nikólka, not seriously but only to satisfy the cropped lout. But such cases were not of frequent occurrence, and Nikólka gave himself the airs of a man ; he smoked cigarettes, spat through his teeth, used bad language, and even boasted to Pyét'ka that he drank *vodka ;* but there he probably lied. In company with the assistants he would run to the neighbouring street to look on at a coarse fight, and when he came back laughing with delight, 'Osip Abrámovitch would give him a couple of smacks, one on each cheek.

Pyét'ka was only ten years old. He did not smoke, or drink *vodka*, or swear, though he knew plenty of bad words, and in all these respects he envied his companion. When there were no customers, and Prokópy, who usually had spent a sleepless night somewhere or other, and in the daytime would drowsily stumble about, and throw himself into the dark corner behind the partition, and Mikháïlo was reading the "Moskóvsky Listók,"† and amongst the accounts of thefts and robberies was looking out for the name of some regular customer, Pyét'ka and Nikólka would chat together. The latter was kinder when the two

* Not "house-porter," but rather "courtyard-keeper." The office is much despised in Russia, since the Dvôrnik is generally a spy in the pay of the police. In middle Russia *dvonik* means (in the country) a peasant who has left his commune (*mir*) and become a freeholder. *Tr.*

† Name of the Moscow equivalent of our "Police News." *Tr.*

were alone together, and used to explain to the younger the meaning of the terms used to describe the various styles of hair-cutting.

Sometimes they sat at the window, by the side of a half-length figure of a female in wax with pink cheeks, staring glass eyes, and straight sparse eyelashes, and looked out on the boulevard, where life had been stirring since the early morning. The trees of the boulevard, powdered with dust, drooped motionless under the merciless burning rays of the sun, and afforded an equally grey, unrefreshing shade. On all the benches were seated men and women in dirty, uncouth attire, without kerchiefs or hats, just as though they lived there, and had no other home. Whether the faces were indifferent, malignant, or dissolute, on all alike was impressed the stamp of utter weariness, and contempt of their surroundings. Oft-times a frowsy head would nod helplessly on a shoulder, and the body would try to stretch itself out to sleep like a third-class passenger, after an unbroken journey of one thousand *verst*,* but there was nowhere to lie down. The park-keeper, in a bright blue uniform with a cane in his hand, walked up and down the pathways, looking out that no one lay down on the benches, or threw himself upon the grass, which, though parched by the sun, was still so soft, so cool. The women, for the most part, more neatly dressed, and even with

* A *versta* is .66 mile, *i.e.* almost one-fifth more than half a mile. *Tr.*

a hint at fashion, were seemingly all of one type of countenance, and one age; although here and there might be found some old, and others quite young, almost children. All of these talked with hoarse, harsh voices; and scolded, embracing the men as simply as though they were alone on the boulevard. Sometimes they would take a snack and a drop of *vodka*. It might happen that a drunken man would beat an equally drunken woman. She would fall down, and get up again, and fall down again, but no one would take her part. Only the faces of the crowd as they gathered round the couple would light up with some intelligence and animation, and wear a broader grin. But when the blue-coated keeper drew near, they would listlessly disperse to their former places. Only the ill-used woman would keep on weeping, uttering meaningless oaths, with her rumpled hair covered with sand, and her semi-made bust looking dirty and yellow in the morning light, cynically and piteously exposed. They would put her on the bottom of a cab and drive her off with her head hanging down, and swaying, as if she were dead.

Nikólka knew several of the men and women by name, and told Pyét'ka nasty stories about them, and laughed showing his sharp teeth. And Pyét'ka admired his knowledge and daring, and thought that some day he would be like him. But meanwhile he wanted to be somewhere else. Wanted badly!

Pyét'ka's days dragged on wonderfully monot-

onously, as like to one another as two brothers. Summer and winter alike he saw the same mirrors, one of which was cracked, and another was contorted and amusing. On the stained wall hung one and the same picture, representing two half-dressed women on the sea-shore, the only difference being that their pink bodies became more spotted with fly dirt, and that the black patch of soot became larger above the place where the common kerosene lamp gleamed all the whole winter's day. And morning, and evening, and the whole livelong day, there hung over Pyét'ka the one and the same abrupt cry, "Boy, water!," and he was always bringing it—always. There were no holidays. On Sundays, when the windows of the stores and shops ceased to illuminate the street, those of the hairdresser's till late at night cast a bright sheaf of light upon the pavement, and the passer-by might observe a little thin figure huddled upon his seat in the corner, and immersed in something between thought and a heavy slumber. Pyét'ka slept a great deal, but still for some reason or other he was always wanting to sleep, and it often seemed to him that all around him was not real, but a very unpleasant dream. Oft-times he would spill the water, or fail to hear the sharp call, "Boy, water!" He grew thinner and thinner, and unsightly scabs came out on his closely-cropped head. Even the not too fastidious customers looked with aversion on this thin, freckled boy, whose eyes were always sleepy, his mouth half-open, and his hands and neck ingrained

with dirt. Round his eyes and under his nose faint lines were forming as though traced by a sharp needle, and they made him look like an aged dwarf.

Pyét'ka did not know whether he was happy or unhappy, but he did want to go to some other place; but where, or what, that place was he could not have told you. When his mother, the cook, Nadéjhda, paid him a visit, he would eat listlessly the sweets she brought him. He never, never complained, but only asked to be taken away from the place. But he soon forgot his request, and would coolly take leave of his mother, without asking when she was coming again. And Nadéjhda thought with sorrow that she had only one son—and that one an imbecile.

How long he had lived in this fashion, Pyét'ka did not know, when suddenly one day his mother came to dinner, had a talk with 'Osip Abrámovitch, and told Pyét'ka that he was to be allowed to go to the bungalow at Tzarítzyno, where her master and mistress were living. At first, Pyét'ka could not realise the good news, but after a time his face broke out into faint wrinkles of soft laughter, and he began to hasten his mother's departure. But for decency's sake she had to talk to 'Osip Abrámovitch about his wife's health, while Pyét'ka was gently dragging her by the hand and shoving her towards the door. He had no idea what a bungalow was like, but he supposed that it must be the very place which he had so longed to go to. With simple egotism he quite forgot Nikólka, who was

standing there with his hands in his pockets endeavouring to regard Nadéjhda with his usual insolence. But instead of insolence there shone in his eyes a profound grief. He had no mother, and at that moment he would not have objected to having just such a stout one as Nadéjhda. The fact was, that he too had never been at a bungalow.

The railway station with its many voices, with its bustle and the rumble of incoming trains, and the whistles of the engines, some thick and irate like the voice of 'Osip Abrámovitch, others thin and shrill like the voice of his sickly wife, with its hurrying passengers who kept coming and going in a continuous stream, as if there were no end to them—all this presented itself for the first time to the puzzled gaze of Pyét'ka, and filled him with a feeling of excitement and impatience. Like his mother, he was afraid of being late, though it wanted a good half-hour to the time of the departure of the suburban train. But when they were once seated in the carriage, and the train had started, he stuck to the window, and only his cropped head kept turning about on his thin neck, as though on a metal spindle.

Pyét'ka had been born and bred in the city, and was now in the country for the first time in his life, and everything there was to him strikingly new and strange; that you could see so far; that the world looked like a lawn; and that the sky of this new world was so wonderfully bright and far-stretching—just as if you were looking at it from the roof of a house! Pyét'ka looked at it

from his own side, and when he turned to his mother, there was the same sky shining blue through the opposite window, and on its surface were flocking—like little angels—small, merry white flecks of clouds. Now Pyét'ka would turn back to his own window, now run over to the other side of the carriage, with confidence laying his ill-washed little hands on the shoulders and knees of strangers, who answered him back with a smile. But one gentleman who was reading a newspaper, and yawning all the time, either from excessive fatigue or from ennui, looked askance at the boy once or twice in not too friendly a manner, and Nadéjhda hastened to apologise :

" It is his first journey by rail—and he is interested."

" Humph," growled the gentleman, and buried himself in his newspaper.

Nadéjhda would very much have liked to tell him, how that Pyét'ka had lived three years with a barber, who had promised to set him upon his feet ; and that this would be a very good thing, since she was a lone weak woman, with no other means of support in case of sickness, or when she became old. But the expression of his face was so uninviting, that she kept all this to herself.

To the right of the railway there was a broad stretch of undulating plain, dark green with the continual moisture, and on its edge there stood grey little houses, just like toys, and upon a high green hill, at the foot of which flowed a silvery river, was perched a similarly toy-like white

church. When the train, with a noisy metallic clanking, which suddenly became intensified, rushed on to a bridge, and seemed to hang suspended in the air over the mirror-like surface of a river, Pyét'ka gave a little shiver of fright and surprise, and started back from the window; but immediately turned to it again, for fear of losing a single detail of the journey. His eyes had long ceased to look sleepy, and the lines had disappeared from his face. It was as though someone had passed a hot flat-iron over his face, smoothing out the wrinkles, and leaving the surface white and shining.

For the first two days of his sojourn at the bungalow the wealth and force of the new impressions, which inundated him from above and from below, confused his timid little soul. In contradistinction to the savages of a former age, who felt lost on coming into a city from the wilderness, this modern savage, who had been snatched away from the stony embrace of the massive city, felt weak and impotent in the face of nature. Here everything was to him living, sentient, and possessed of conscious will. He was afraid of the forest, which gently rustled over his head, and was so dark, so passive, so terrible in its immensity. But the bright green joyful meadows, which seemed to be singing with all their bright flowers, he loved, and wished to fondle them as a sister; and the dark blue sky called him to itself, and laughed like a mother. Pyét'ka would become agitated, shudder, and grow pale, would smile

at something, and slowly, like an old man, walk along the outskirts of the forest, and on the wooded shore of the pond. There, weary and out of breath, he would fling himself down on the thick damp grass, and sink into it, only his little freckled nose appearing above the green surface. For the first two days he was always going back to his mother, and nestling up to her: and when the master of the house asked him whether he liked being at the bungalow, he would smile in confusion and answer:

"Very much!"

And then he would go off again to the threatening forest, and the still water, and it was as though he were questioning them.

But after two days Pyét'ka had arrived at a complete understanding with Nature. This was brought about by the co-operation of a schoolboy named Mítya* from "Old Tzarítzyno." The schoolboy had a swarthy countenance, the colour of a second-class carriage. His hair stood erect on the crown of his head, and was quite white, so bleached was it by the sun. He was fishing in the pond, when Pyét'ka caught sight of him and unceremoniously entered into conversation with him. They came to terms with wonderful promptitude, and he allowed Pyét'ka to hold one of the rods, and afterwards took him some distance off to bathe. Pyét'ka was very much afraid of going into the water, but when once in, he did not wish

* Short for Dmítri. *Tr.*

to come out again, but pretended to swim, putting his forehead and nose above the water. Then he got a great gulp of water in his mouth, and beat the water with his hands and made a great splashing. At this moment he was very like a puppy, that had for the first time fallen into the water. When Pyét'ka dressed himself he was as blue as a corpse with the cold, and as he talked his teeth chattered. At the proposal of Mítka, who was of inexhaustible resource, they next explored the ruins of a mansion. They clambered upon the roof overgrown with shoots, and wandered between the broken-down walls of the great building. They did enjoy themselves there! All about heaps of stones were piled up, on which they climbed with difficulty, and between which grew young rowan and birch trees. It was still as death, and it seemed as though someone suddenly jumped out from a corner, or that some horrible, terrible face appeared through the aperture left by a broken window. By degrees Pyét'ka began to feel quite at home at the bungalow, and he forgot that there was any 'Osip Abrámovitch or barber's shop in the world.

"Just look how he is putting on flesh! He's a regular merchant!"* Nadéjhda at this time would exclaim with delight.

She was stout enough herself and her face shone

* The old-fashioned merchants, especially of Moscow, are noted not only for their *embonpoint*, but also for their ostentation and rough horseplay. One nickname for them is "unbridled roans." *Tr.*

with the heat of the kitchen like a copper samovár. She attributed his improvement to the fact that she gave him plenty to eat. But in reality Pyét'ka ate very little indeed, not because he did not care for his food, but because he could scarcely find time for it. If only it had been possible to bolt his food without mastication!—but one must masticate, and during the intervals swing ones feet, since Nadéjhda ate deuced slowly, polishing the bones and wiping her fingers on her apron, while she kept up a perpetual chatter. But he was up to the neck in business: he had to bathe four times, to cut a fishing-rod in the hazel coppice, to dig for worms—all this required time. Now Pyét'ka ran about bare-foot, and that was a thousand times pleasanter than wearing boots with thick soles: the rustling ground now warmed, now cooled, his feet so deliciously. He had even discarded his second-hand school jacket, in which he looked like a full-grown master-barber, and thereby became amazingly rejuvenated. He put it on only in the evening, when he went and stood on the dam to watch the Master and Mistress boating. Well-dressed and cheerful they would laughingly take their seats in the rocking boat, which leisurely ploughed the mirror-like surface of the water on which the reflection of the trees swayed, as though agitated by a breeze.

At the end of the week the Master brought from the city a letter addressed "to Cook Nadéjhda." When he had read it over to her she began to cry, and smeared her face all over with the soot, which

was on her apron. From the fragmentary remarks which accompanied this operation, it might be deduced that the contents of the letter affected Pyét'ka. This took place in the evening. Pyét'ka was playing athletic sports by himself in the back court, and puffing out his cheeks, because that made it considerably easier to jump. The schoolboy Mítya had taught him this stupid but interesting occupation, and now Pyét'ka, like a true "sportsman,"* was practising alone. The master came out, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said:

"Well, my friend, you have to go!"

Pyét'ka smiled in confusion and said nothing. "What a strange fellow," thought the master.

"Yes, have to go."

Pyét'ka smiled. Nadéjhda coming up with tears in her eyes repeated:

"You have to go, sonny."

"Where?" said Pyét'ka in surprise. He had forgotten the city; and the other place, to which he had always so wanted to go away—was found.

"To your master, 'Osip Abrámovitch."

Still Pyét'ka failed to understand, though the matter was as clear as daylight. But his mouth felt suddenly dry, and his tongue moved with difficulty as he asked:

"How then can I go fishing to-morrow? Look, here is the rod."

"But what can one do? He wants you. Pro-

* This English clap-trap word is used even in Russia. *Tr.*

kópy, he says, is ill, and has been taken to the hospital. He says he has not enough hands. Don't cry! See, he'll be sure to let you come again. He is kind is 'Osip Abrámovitch."

But Pyét'ka was not thinking of crying, and still did not understand. On one side there was the fact, the fishing-rod—on the other the phantom, 'Osip Abrámovitch. But gradually Pyét'ka's thoughts began to clear and a strange metamorphosis took place: 'Osip Abrámovitch became the fact, and the fishing-rod, which had not yet had time to dry, was changed into the phantom. And then Pyét'ka surprised his mother, and distressed the master and his wife, and would have been surprised himself if he had been capable of self-analysis. He did not begin to cry, as town children, thin and half-starved, cry; he simply bawled louder than the strongest-voiced man; and began to roll on the ground, as the drunken women rolled on the boulevard. He clenched his skinny fists, and struck his mother's hands and the ground, in fact everything he came across, feeling, indeed, the pain caused by the pebbles and sharp stones, but striving, as it were, to increase it.

In course of time Pyét'ka became calm again, and the master said to his wife, who was standing before the glass arranging a white rose in her hair:

"You see he has left off. Children's grief is not long-lived."

"All the same I am very sorry for the poor little boy."

"Yes, indeed! they live under terrible conditions, but there are people who are still worse off. Are you ready?"

And they went off to Digman's Gardens, where dances had been arranged for the evening, and a military band was already playing.

The next day Pyét'ka started for Moscow by the 7 a.m. train. Again he saw the green fields, grey with the night's dew, only they did not now run in the same direction as before, but in the opposite. The second-hand school jacket enveloped his thin body, and from the opening at the neck stuck out the corner of a white paper collar. Pyét'ka did not turn to the window, indeed, he hardly looked at it, but sat so still and modest, with his little hands primly folded upon his knees. His eyes were sleepy and apathetic, and fine wrinkles, as in the case of an old man, gathered about his eyes and under his nose. Suddenly the pillars and the planks of the platform flashed before the window, and the train stopped.

They pressed through the hurrying crowd, and came out into the noisy street; and the great, greedy city callously swallowed up its little victim.

"Put away the fishing tackle for me," said Pyét'ka, when his mother deposited him at the door of the barber's shop.

"Trust me for that, sonny! May-be you will come again."

And once more in the dirty, stuffy shop was

heard the sharp call, "Boy, water!" and the customer saw a small, dirty hand thrust out to the ledge below the mirror, and heard the vague, threatening whisper, "Just you wait a bit!" This meant that the sleepy boy had either spilled the water, or had bungled the orders. But at nights from the place where Nikólka and Pyét'ka lay side by side, a little low and agitated voice might be heard telling about the bungalow, and speaking of what is not, and what no one has ever seen or heard. And when silence supervened, and only the irregular breathing of the children was audible, another voice, unusually deep and strong for a child, would exclaim :

"The devils! May they bu'st!"

"Who are devils?"

"Why, the whole blooming lot, of course!"

A string of carts passed by, and drowned the boys' voices with its noisy rumbling; and then that distant cry of complaint was heard, which had for long been borne in from the boulevard, where a drunken man was beating an equally drunken woman.

THE TOCSIN

I

During that hot and ill-omened summer everything was burning. Whole towns, villages and hamlets were consumed; forests and fields were no longer a protection to them, but even the forests themselves submissively burst into flame, and the fire spread like a red table-cloth over the parched meadows. During the day the dim red sun was hidden in acrid smoke, but at night-time in all quarters of the sky a quiet red-glow burst forth, which rocked in silent, fantastic dance; and strange confused shadows of men and trees crept over the ground like some unknown species of reptile. The dogs ceased their welcoming bark, which from afar calls to the traveller and promises him a roof and hospitality, and either uttered a prolonged melancholy howl, or crept into the cellar in sullen silence. And men, like dogs, looked at one another with evil, frightened eyes, and spoke aloud of arson, and secret incendiaries. Indeed, in one remote village they had killed an old man, who could not give a satisfactory account of his movements, and then the women had wept over the murdered man, and pitied his grey beard all matted with dark blood.

During this hot and ill-omened summer I lived at the house of a country squire, where were many women, young and old. By day we worked and talked, and thought little of conflagrations, but when night came on we were seized with fear. The owner of the property was often absent in the town. Then for whole nights we slept not a wink, but in fear and trembling made our rounds of the homestead in search of an incendiary. We huddled close together and spoke in whispers; but the night was still, and the buildings stood out in dark, unfamiliar masses. They seemed to us as strange, as if we had never seen them before, and terribly unstable, as though they were expecting the fire, and were already ripe for it. Once, through a crack in the wall, there gleamed before us something bright. It was the sky, but we thought it was a fire, and with screams the womenkind rushed to me, who was still almost a boy, and entreated my protection.

But I—held my breath for fear, and could not move a step.

Sometimes in the depth of night I would rise from my hot, tumbled bed and creep through the window into the garden. It was an ancient, formal and stately garden, so protected that it answered the very fiercest storm with nothing more than a suppressed drone. Below it was dark and deadly still as at the bottom of an abyss; but above there was a continual indistinct rustling and sound, like the far-off speech of the steppe. Concealing myself from someone, who seemed to

be following at my heels, and looking over my shoulder, I would make my way to the end of the garden, where upon a high bank stood a wattle-fence, and beyond the fence far below extended fields and forests and hamlets hidden in the darkness. Lofty, gloomy, silent lime-trees opened out before me, and between their thick black stems, through the interstices of the fence, and through the space between the leaves I could see something terrible, extraordinary, which would fill my heart with an uneasy dread feeling, and make my legs twitch with a slight tremor. I could see the sky, not the dark, still sky of night, but rosy-red, such as is not nor by day nor night. The mighty limes stood grave and silent, like men expecting something, but the sky was unnaturally rosy, and the ominous reflection of the burning earth beneath darted in fiery red spasms about the sky. And curling columns would go slowly up and disappear in the height ; and it was a puzzle, as strangely unnatural as the pink colouring of the sky, how they could be so silent, when below all was gnashing of teeth ; how they could be so unhurried and stately there above, when everything was tossing in restless confusion here below.

As though coming to themselves the lofty limes would all at once begin to talk together with their tops, and then suddenly relapse into silence, congealed, as it were, for a long time in sullen expectation. It would become still as at the bottom of an abyss, while far behind me I felt

conscious of the house on the alert, full of frightened people; the limes crowded watchfully around me, and in front silently rocked a rose-red sky, such as is not nor by night nor day.

And because I saw it not as a whole, but only through the interstices between the trees, it was all the more terrible and incomprehensible.

II

It was night and I was dosing restlessly, when there reached my ear a dull staccato sound, rising as it seemed from below the ground ; it penetrated my brain and settled there like a round stone. After it another forced its way in, equally short and dolorous, and my head became heavy and sick, as though moulten lead were falling upon it in thick drops. The drops kept boring and burning into my brain ; they became ever more and more, and soon they were filling my head with a dripping rain of impetuous staccato sounds.

" Boom ! boom ! boom ! " Someone tall, strong and impatient kept jerking out from afar.

I opened my eyes, and at once understood that it was the alarm-bell, and that Slobodíshtchy, the next village, was on fire. It was dark in the room and the window was closed, and yet at the terrible call the whole room, with its furniture, pictures and flowers, went out, as it were, into the street, and no longer was one conscious of wall or ceiling.

I do not remember how I got dressed, and know not why I ran on alone and not with the others ; whether it was that they forgot me, or I did not remember their existence. The tocsin called persistently and dully, as though its sounds were falling, not from the transparent air, but were

cast forth from the immeasurable thickness of the earth. I ran on.

Amid the rosy sheen of the sky the stars twinkled above my head, and in the garden it was strangely light, such as is not nor by day, nor by majestic moon-lit night, but when I reached the hedge something bright-red, seething, tossing desperately, looked up at me through the fissures. The lofty limes, as though sprinkled with blood, trembled in their rounded leaves, and turned them back in fear, but their sound was inaudible on account of the short, loud strokes of the swinging bell. Now the sounds became clear and distinct, and flew with mad speed like a swarm of red-hot stones. They did not circle in the air like the doves of the peaceful angelus,* neither did they expand therein in the caressing waves of the solemn call to prayer ; they flew straight like grim harbingers of woe, who have no time to glance backward and whose eyes are wide with terror.

"Boom! boom! boom!" they flew with unrestrainable impetuosity, the strong overtaking the weak, and all of them together delving into the earth and piercing the sky.

And, as straight as they, ran I over the immense tilled plain, which faintly scintillated with blood-red gleams like the scales of a great black wild-beast. Above my head, at a wonderful height, bright isolated sparks floated by, and in front was one of those terrible village conflagrations, in

* This is the Western equivalent of the Russian. *Tr.*

which in one holocaust perish houses, cattle and human beings. There behind the irregular line of dark trees now round, now sharp as pikes, the dazzling flame soared aloft, arched its neck proudly, like a maddened horse, leaped, threw burning flocks from its midst into the black sky, and then greedily stooped for fresh prey. The blood surged in my ears with the swiftness of my running, and my heart beat loud and rapidly; but the irregular strokes of the tocsin overtook my heart-beats and struck me full on head and breast. And so full of despair was it that it seemed not the clanging of a metal bell, but as though the very heart of the much-suffering earth were beating wildly in the agony of death.

"Boom! boom! boom!" the red-hot conflagration ejaculated. And it was difficult to realise that the church belfrey, so small and slight, so peaceful and still, like a maiden in a pink dress, could be giving forth those loud, despairing cries.

I kept falling down on my hands against clods of dry earth, which scattered beneath them, and again I would rise and run on, and the fire and the summoning sound of the bell ran to meet me. One could already hear the wood crackling as it caught fire, and the many-voiced cry of human beings with the dominating notes of despair and terror. And when the serpent-like hissing of the fire ceased for a moment, a prolonged groaning became clearly differentiated: it was the wailing of women, and the bellowing of cattle in a panic of terror.

A swamp intercepted my path. A wide, weed-grown swamp, which ran far to right and left. I went into the water up to my knees, then to the breast, but the swamp began to suck me down, and I returned to the bank. Opposite, quite close, raged the fire, throwing up into the sky golden sparks like the burning leaves of a gigantic tree: while the water of the swamp stood out like a mirror sparkling with fire in a black frame of reed and sedge. The tocsin called, despairingly in deadly agony:

"Come! do come!"

III

I flung along the strand, and my dark shadow flung after me, and when I stooped down to the water to find a bottom, the spectre of a fire-red form gazed at me from the black abyss, and in the distorted lineaments of its face, and in its dishevelled hair, which seems as though it were lifted up upon the head by some terrific force, I failed to recognize myself.

"Ah! what is it? O Lord!" I prayed with outstretched hands;

But the tocsin kept calling. The bell no longer entreated, it shouted like a human being, and groaned and choked. The strokes had lost their regularity, and piled themselves one on the top of the other, rapidly and without echo; they died down, were reproduced and again died down. Once more I bent down to the water, and alongside of my own reflexion I perceived another fiery spectre, tall and erect, and to my horror just like a human being.

"Who's that?" I screamed, looking round. Close to my shoulder stood a man looking at the conflagration in silence. His face was pale, his cheeks were covered with still moist blood, which gleamed as it reflected the fire. He was dressed simply, like a peasant. Possibly he had been already here when I ran up, and had been stopped like myself by the swamp, or possibly he may have

arrived after me; but at all events I had not heard his approach, nor did I know who he was.

"It burns," said he, without removing his eyes from the fire. The reflected fire leapt in them, and they seemed large and glassy.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?" I asked; "you are all bloody." With long, thin fingers he touched my cheeks, looked at them, and again fixed his gaze upon the fire.

"It burns," he repeated, without paying any attention to me. "Everything is burning."

"Do you know how to get there?" I asked, drawing back. I guessed that this was one of the many maniacs, which this ill-omened summer had produced.

"It burns!" he replied; "ho! ho! don't it burn!" he cried, laughing, and looked at me kindly, wagging his head. The hurried strokes of the tocsin suddenly stopped, and the flame crackled louder. It moved like a living thing, and with long arms, as though weary, dragged itself to the silent belfry, which now seemed near and tall, and clothed no longer in pink but in red. Above the dark loop-hole, where the bells were hung, there appeared a timid quiet tongue of fire, like the flame of a candle, and was reflected in pale rays on their metal surface. Once more the bell began to tremble, sending forth its last madly-despairing cries, and once more I flung myself along the shore, and my black shadow flung after me.

"I'm coming, I'm coming!" I cried, as though

in reply to someone calling me. But the tall man was quietly seated behind me, embracing his knees, and kept singing a loud secondo to the bell : " Boom ! boom ! boom ! "

" Are you mad ? " I shouted to him. But he only sang the louder and the merrier, " Boom ! boom ! boom ! "

" Be quiet ! " I entreated. But he smiled and sang on, wagging his head, and the fire flared up in his glassy eyes. He was more terrible than the fire, this maniac, and I turned round and took to flight along the shore. But I had scarcely gone a few steps, when his lanky figure appeared silently alongside of me, his shirt fluttering in the wind. He ran in silence, even as I did, with long untiring strides, and in silence our black shadows ran along the up-turned field.

The bell was suffocating in its last death-struggle and cried out like a human being who, despairing of assistance, has lost all hope. And we ran on in silence aimlessly into the darkness, and close to us our black shadows leapt mockingly.

BARGAMOT AND GARAS'KA

It would be unjust to say that Nature had injured Iván Akindínytch Bergamótov, who in his official capacity was called " Constable No. 20," and unofficially simply Bargomótov. The inhabitants of one of the outskirts of the provincial towns of Aryól (Orel), who in their turn were nicknamed " gunners," from the name of their abode (Gunner Street) and, from the moral side were characterized as " broken-headed gunners," when they dubbed Iván Akindínovytch " Bargamót," were without doubt not thinking of the qualities which belong to such a delicate and delicious fruit as the *bergamot*. By his exterior Bargamót* reminded one rather of the mastodon, or of any of those engaging, but extinct creatures, which for want of room have long ago deserted a world already filling up with flacid little humans. Tall, stout, strong, loud-voiced Bargamót loomed big on the police horizon, and certainly would long ago have attained notable rank, if only his soul, compressed within those stout walls, had not been sunk in an heroic sleep.

Outward impressions in passing to Bargamót's soul by means of his little fat-encased eyes, lost

* A corruption of Behemoth. The "r" is introduced, and there is no " h " in Russian. *Tr.*

all their sharpness and force, and arrived at their destination only in the form of feeble echoes and reflexions. A person of sublime requirements would have called him a lump of flesh ; his superior officers called him a "stock," but a useful one—while to the "gunners," the persons most interested in this question, he was a staid, serious matter-of-fact man, one worthy of every respect and consideration. What Bargamot knew he knew well, were it only a policeman's instructions, which he had assimilated some time or other with all the energy of his mighty frame, and which had sunk so deep into his sluggish brain, that it would have been impossible to rout them out again, even with vitriol. Nevertheless certain truths occupied a permanent position in his soul, truths acquired by way of life's experience, and unconditionally dominating the situation.

Of that which Bargamot did not know he kept such an imperturbably stolid silence, that people who did know it became somehow or other somewhat ashamed of their knowledge. But the chief point was this, that Bargamot was enormously powerful ; and might was right in Gunner Street, a slum inhabited by shoemakers, tailors who worked at home, and the representatives of other "liberal" professions. Owning two public houses, uproarious on Sundays and Mondays, Gunner Street devoted all its leisure hours to Homeric fights, in which the women, bare-headed and dishevelled, took immediate part (as they separated their husbands), and also the little children,

who gazed with delight on the daring of their papas.

All this rough wave of drunken "gunners," beat against the immovable Bargamot, as against a stone breakwater, while he would deliberately seize with his mighty hands a pair of the most desperate rowdies, and personally conduct them to the "lock up," and the rowdies would obediently submit their fate to the hands of Bargamot, protesting merely for the sake of appearances.

Such was Bargamot in the domain of international relations. In the sphere of home politics he held himself with no less dignity. The small tumble-down cottage, in which Bargamot lived with his wife and two young children, and which with difficulty afforded room for his mighty body, and trembled with craziness and with fear for its own existence whenever Bargamot round turned, might be at ease, if not with regard to its own wooden structure, at all events in respect of the family unity.

Domestic, careful, and fond of digging in his garden on free days, Bargamot was severe. He instructed his wife and children through the same medium of physical influence, not conforming so much to the actual requirements of science as to certain indefinite prescriptions on that score which existed in the ramifications of his big head. This did not prevent his wife Máriya, who was still a young and handsome woman, on the one hand from respecting her husband as a steady, sober man, and on the other, in spite of all his massive-

ness, from twisting him round her finger with that ease and force of which only weak women are capable.

At about ten o'clock on a warm spring evening Bargamot stood at his usual post at the corner of Gunner Street and the 3rd Garden Street. He was in a bad humour. To-morrow was Easter Day and soon people would be going to church, while he would have to stand on duty till 3 o'clock in the morning, and would only get home in time for the conclusion of the fast.* Bargamot did not feel any need of prayer, but the bright holiday air which permeated the unusually peaceful and quiet street affected even him.

He did not like the spot on which he had stood still every day for a matter of ten years. He felt a desire to do something of a holiday character such as others were doing. And in view of these uneasy feelings there arose within him a certain discontent and impatience. Moreover he was hungry. His wife had given him no dinner at all that day, and so he had had to put up with a few sups of *kuass* and bread. His great stomach was insistently demanding food; and how long it was still to the conclusion of the fast!

Ptu!—spat Bargamot, as he made a cigarette and began reluctantly to suck at it. At home he had some good cigarettes, presented to him by a local shop-keeper, but he was reserving them till the conclusion of the fast.

* There is in English no special term for the first meal after the Lenten fast. *Tr.*

Soon the "gunners" drew along towards the church, clean and respectable in jackets and waistcoats over red and blue flannel shirts, and in long boots with innumerable creases, and high pointed heels. To-morrow all this splendour was destined to disappear behind the counter of the "pub,"* or to be torn in pieces in a friendly struggle for harmony.

But for to-day the "gunners" were resplendent. Each one carefully carried a parcel of paschal cakes. None took any notice of Bargamot, neither did he look with especial love on his "god-children," and uneasily prognosticated how many times he would have to make a journey to-morrow to the police station.

In fact, he was jealous that they were free and could go where it was bright, noisy and cheerful, while he was stuck there like a penitent.

"Here I have to stand because of you, drunkards," muttered he, summing up his thoughts, and spat once more—he felt a hollow in the pit of his stomach.

The street was becoming empty. The Eucharistic bell had ceased. Then the joyful changes of the treble peal, so cheerful after the melancholy tolling of the Lenten bells, spread over the world the joyful news of Christ's Resurrection. Bargamot took off his hat and crossed himself. Soon he would be going home. He became more cheerful as he imagined to himself the table laid with a

* *I.e.* would be "spouted" or pawned. *Tr.*

clean cloth, the paschal cakes and the eggs. He would without hurry give to all the Easter salutation. They would wake up Jack and bring him in, and he would at once demand the coloured egg, about which he had held circumstantial conversations the whole week through with his more experienced little sister. Oh, how he'll open wide his mouth when his father brings him, not the bright dyed egg, but the real marble one, which the same obliging shop-keeper had presented to Bargamot!

"Amusing little fellow!" said Bargamot with a smile, feeling a sort of paternal tenderness welling up from the depths of his soul.

But Bargamot's placidity was broken in on in the most abject manner. Round the corner were heard uneven footsteps and low mutterings.

"Who the devil is coming here?" thought Bargamot, looking round the corner and feeling injured in his very soul.

"Garás'ka! Yes, drunk as usual! Well, that's a finisher!"

It was a mystery to Bargamot how Garás'ka could have managed to get drunk before daylight, but of the fact of his drunkenness there was no doubt. His behaviour, mysterious as it would have been to an outsider, was perfectly clear to Bargamot, who was well acquainted with the "Gunner" soul in general, and with the low nature of Garás'ka in particular. Attracted by an irresistible force from the middle of the street,

in which he had the habit of walking, he was pressed close to the hording. Supporting himself with both hands, and contemplating the wall with a concentrated air of enquiry, Garas'ka staggered, while he gathered up his strength for a fresh struggle with any unexpected impediments he might meet with.

After a short but intense meditation he pushed himself energetically from the wall, and staggered backwards into the middle of the street, made a deliberate turn, and set out with long strides into space, which turned out to be not quite so endless as it has been said to be, but was in fact bounded by a mass of lamps.

With the first of these, Garas'ka came into the closest relations, and clasped it in the firm embrace of friendship.

"A lamp! Stop!" said he curtly, as he established the accomplished fact. Quite unusually, of course, Garas'ka was in an excessively good humour. Instead of heaping well-deserved objurations upon the lamp-post he turned to it with mild reproaches, which contained some touches of familiarity.

"Stand still, you silly ass, where are you going to?" he muttered as he staggered away from the lamp-post, and again fell with his whole chest upon it, almost flattering his nose against its cold, damp surface.

"That's right! eh?" and by clinging with half his length along the post he managed to hold on, and sank into a reverie.

Bargamot contemptuously compressed his lips, as he looked down on Garas'ka from his superior height. Nobody annoyed him so much in the whole of Gunner Street as this wretched toper. To look at him—one would not have thought there was any strength in him, and yet he was the greatest scandal in the whole neighbourhood.

He's not a man, but an ulcer! A "gunner" gets drunk, makes a disturbance, spends the night in the lock-up, and he gets over all this like a gentleman—but Garas'ka always does it stealthily, and of malice prepense. He may be beaten half to death or nearly starved at the police station, still they can never break him of bad language, of his most offensively foul tongue.

He will stand under the windows of any of the most respectable people in Gunner Street, and begin to swear without rhyme or reason. The shopmen seize Garas'ka and beat him — the crowd laughs and advises them to give it him hot. Garas'ka would revile even Bargamot himself in such fantastically realistic language, that without understanding all the subtleties of his wit, he felt himself more insulted, than if he had been whipped.

How Garas'ka got his living, remained to the "gunners" one of those mysteries which enveloped his whole existence. Certainly no one had ever seen him sober. He lived, or rather camped about in the orchards, or the river-bank, or under shrubs. In winter he disappeared to somewhere or other, and with the first breath of spring he re-appeared.

What attracted him to Gunner Street, where it was everyone's business to beat him, was again a profound mystery of Garas'ka's soul, but get rid of him they could not. They strongly suspected, and that not without reason, that he was a thief, but they could not take him in the act, so he was beaten on merely circumstantial evidence.

On this occasion Garas'ka had evidently a difficult path to negotiate. The rags, which made a pretence of seriously covering his emaciated body, were all over still undried mud.

His face, with its big, bulbous red nose, which was incontestably one of the causes of his unstable equilibrium, was covered with an irregularly distributed watery growth, and gave substantial evidence of its close relations with alcohol and a neighbour's fist. On his cheek near the eye was a scratch of evidently recent origin.

He succeeded at last in parting company with the lamp-post, and when he observed the dignified silent figure of Bargamot he was overjoyed.

"Our best respects to you Bargamot Bargamótytch—we hope we see you well!" said he with a polite wave of the hand, but he staggered, and was fain to prop himself up with his back against the lamp-post.

"Where are you going to?" growled Bargamot saturninely.

"We're orl righ'!"

"On the old lay, eh? Or do you want a doss in the cells. You wretch, I'll run you in at once."

"No, you don't!"

Garas'ka was just going to make a gesture of defiance, when he wisely restrained himself, spat and rubbed his foot about on the ground as though to rub out the spittle.

"You can talk when you get to the police station! March!"

Bargamot's mighty hand stretched out to Garas'ka's collar, so greasy in fact that it was evident that Bargamot was not his first guide on the thorny path of well-doing. Giving the drunken man a slight shake, and propelling his body in the required direction, and at the same time giving it a certain stability, Bargamot dragged him towards the above-mentioned goal, just as a strong hawser might tow after it a very light schooner, which had met with an accident outside the harbour. He considered himself deeply injured, instead of enjoying his well-earned rest, to have to drag himself with this drunkard to the station.

Ugh! Bargamot's hands itched—but the consciousness that on such a high festival it would be unseemly to let them have their way, restrained him. Garas'ka strode on bravely, mingling in a remarkable manner self-confidence, and even insolence, with meekness. He evidently harboured some thought of his own, which he began to approach by the Socratic method.

"Tell me, Mr. Policeman, what is to-day?"

"Won't you shut up!" Bargamot replied in contempt. "Drunk before daylight!"

"Has the bell at Michael the Archangel's rung yet?"

"Yes, what's that to you?"

"Then Christ is risen!"

"Well, He is risen."

"Then allow me——" Garas'ka was carrying on this conversation half twisted towards Bargamot, and with his face resolutely turned to him. Bargamot, interested by the strange questions, mechanically let go the greasy collar. Garas'ka, losing his support, staggered and fell before he could show to Bargamot an object which he had just taken out of his pocket. Raising his great shoulders, as he supported himself on his hands, Garas'ka looked on the ground, then fell face downwards, and began to wail, as a peasant woman wails for the dead.

Garas'ka howling! Bargamot was surprised, but deciding that it must be some new joke of his, he still felt interested as to developments. The development was that Garas'ka continued howling without words, just like a dog.

"What's up now? Off your nut, eh?" said Bargamot as he gave him a shove with his foot. He went on howling. Bargamot was in a dilemma.

"What's got yer, eh?"

"The eg—g."

"Well?"

Garas'ka went on howling, but less noisily, he sat down and lifted up his hand. The hand was covered with something sticky, to which adhered pieces of coloured egg-shell. Bargamot still in doubt, began to have an inkling that something untoward had taken place.

" I——like a gentleman——to present——Easter egg——but you——" blubbered Garas'ka disconnectedly; but Bargamot understood.

It was evident what had been Garas'ka's intention. He wished to present him with an Easter egg according to Christian usage, and Bargamot was for taking him to goal. Perhaps he had brought the egg a long way, and now it was broken —and he was crying. Bargamot imagined to himself that the marble egg he was keeping for Jack was broken, and how sorry it made him.

" Ere's a go ! " said Bargamot shaking his head, as he looked at the wallowing drunkard, and pitied him as intensely as he would have pitied a man cruelly wronged by his own brother.

" He was going to present——" " He is also a living soul," muttered the policeman, striving albeit clumsily to render the state of affairs clear to himself, and feeling a mixture of shame and pity, which became more and more oppressive.

" And you would have run him in ! Shame on yer ! "

Sighing heavily as he bent down he knocked his short sword against a stone, and sat down on his heels near to Garas'ka.

" Well," he muttered in confusion, " perhaps it is not broken."

" Not broken ! Why yer was ready to break my snout for me. Brute ! "

" But what did you shove for ! "

" What for——" mimicked Garas'ka. " I was going——like a gentleman to——and him to——

the lock up. Think that's my last egg? Yer lump!"

Bargamot sniffed. He did not feel in the least hurt by Garas'ka's abuse; through his whole ill-organised interior he felt a sort of half pity, half shame, while in the remotest depths of his stout body something kept tiresomely wimbling and torturing.

"Can one help giving you a thrashing?" said Bargamot, more to himself than to Garas'ka.

"Not you, you garden scarecrow! Now look 'ere."

Garas'ka was evidently falling into his usual groove. In his somewhat clearing brain he was picturing to himself a whole perspective of the most compromising terms of abuse, and most insulting epithets, when Bargamot cleared his throat with a sound which left not the slightest doubt as to the firmness of his determination and declared:

"We'll go to my house, and break the fast."

"What! go to your house you tubby devil!"

"Let's go, I say."

Garas'ka's surprise was boundless. Quite passively he allowed himself to be lifted up and led by the hand, and he went—but whither? Not to the lock-up, but to the house of Bargamot himself—actually to eat his Easter breakfast there! A seductive thought came into his head—to give Bargamot the slip, but though his head had become cleared by the very unusuallness of the situation his feet still remained in such evil

case, that they seemed sworn to perpetually cling to one another, and to prevent each other from walking.

Then, too, Bargamot was such a wonder that Garas'ka, truth to tell, did not want to get away.

Bargamot, twisting his tongue, and searching for words and stuttering, now propounded to him the instructions for a policeman, and now reverting to the special question of thrashing, and the lock-up, deciding in his own mind in the positive, and at the same time in the negative.

"You say truly, Iván Akindínytch, we must be beaten," acknowledged Garas'ka, feeling even a sort of awkwardness. Bargamot was a sore wonder!

"No, I don't mean to do that," mumbled Bargamot, evidently understanding, even less than Garas'ka, what his woolly tongue was babbling.

They arrived at last at Bargamot's house—and Garas'ka had already ceased to wonder. Máriya at first opened her eyes wide at the sight of the unwonted couple, but she guessed from her husband's perturbed look, that there was no room for objections, and in her womanly kindheartedness, quickly understood what she was expected to do.

Quieted and confused, Garas'ka sat down at the decorated table. He felt ashamed enough to sink into the ground. Ashamed of his rags, of his dirty hands, ashamed of his whole self, torn, drunken, disgusting as he was. Scalding himself

with the deuced hot soup, swimming with fat, he spilt it on the table cloth, and although the hostess with delicacy pretended not to have noticed it, he grew confused and spilt still more. So unbearably did those shrivelled fingers tremble with those great dirty nails, which Garas'ka now noticed for the first time.

"Iván Akindínytch, what surprise have you for Jacky?" asked Máriya.

"Never mind——later on," hurriedly replied Bargamot. He was scalding himself with the soup, blew on his spoon, and stolidly wiped his moustache—but through all this solidity the same amazement was apparent, as in the case of Garas'ka.

Máriya hospitably pressed her guest to eat:

"Garásim," she said, "how are you called after your father's name?"

"Andréïtch."

"Welcome, Garásim Andréïtch."*

Garas'ka, in endeavouring to swallow, choked, and throwing down his spoon, dropped his head on the table, right on the greasy spot which he had just made. From his breast there escaped again that rough, piteous howl, which had before so disturbed Bargamot.

The children, who had almost left off taking any notice of the guest, dropped their spoons and

* To address a person by his Christian name and the Christian name of his father with the termination "itch" is a sign of friendship. Garas'ka is short for Gerâsim. *Tr.*

joined their treble to his tenor. Bargamot looked at his wife with a troubled and woeful expression.

"Now, what's the matter with you, Garásim Andréïtch. Leave off," said she, trying to quiet the perturbed guest.

"By my father's name! Since I was born no one ever called me so!"

"MEN MAY RISE ON STEPPING-STONES OF THEIR DEAD SELVES TO HIGHER THINGS"*

HAVE you ever happened to walk in a burial-ground?

Those little walled-in, quiet corners, overgrown with luscious grass, so small, and yet to ravenous, possess a peculiar dolorous poetry all their own.

Day after day thither are borne new corpses, a whole, immense, living, noisy city has been already borne thither one by one, and lo! the new city which has grown in its place is awaiting its turn—and the little corners remain ever the same, small, still, ravenous.

The peculiar air in them, the peculiar silence, and the lisping of the trees different there to anywhere else, are all mournful, pensive, tender. It is as though those white birches could not forget all those weeping eyes, which have sought the sky betwixt their green branches, and as though it were no wind, but deep sighs which keep swaying the air and the fresh leaves.

You, too, wander about the graveyard silent and pensive. Your ear is conscious of the gentle

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* These words from Tennyson's "In Memoriam" exactly express our author's meaning. The Russian title translated is: "Splendid is the life for those who are risen from the dead." *Tr.*

echoes of deep groans and tears, while your eyes rest on rich monuments, and modest wooden crosses; and the unmarked tombs of strangers, covering their dead, who were strangers when living, unmarked, unobserved. And you read the inscriptions on the monuments, and all these people who have disappeared from the world rise up in your imagination. You see them young, laughing, loving; you see them hale, loquacious, insolently confident in the endlessness of life.

And they are dead.

* * * * * *

But is it necessary to go out of one's house to visit a burial ground? Is it not sufficient for this purpose, that the darkness of night should envelope you, and have swallowed up all the sounds of day?

How many rich and sumptuous monuments! How many unmarked graves of strangers!

But is night needful in order to visit a graveyard? Is not day-time enough——restless, noisy day, sufficient unto which is the evil thereof?

Look into your own soul, and then, be it day or night, you will find there a burial ground. Small greedy, having devoured so much! And a gentle, sorrowful, whisper will ye hear, an echo of by-gone heavy groans, when the dead was dear, whom ye left in the tomb, and could not forget nor cease to love. And monuments ye will see, and inscriptions half blotted out with tears; and still, obscure, little tombs; small and ominous mounds, under which is hidden something which once was living, although ye knew not its life, nor remarked

its death. But, may-be, it was the very best in your soul——.

But why talk about it? Look for yourselves. And have you not indeed thus looked into your burial-ground every day, every single day of the long, weary year? May-be as late as yesterday you recalled the dear departed, and wept over them. May-be only yesterday you buried someone who had long been seriously ill, and had been forgotten even in life.

Lo! under the heavy marble surrounded by iron rails rests Love of mankind, and her sister Faith in them. How beautiful were they, and wondrous kind—these sisters. What bright light burned in their eyes, what strange power was wielded by their tender white hands!

With what a caress did those white hands bring the cold drink to lips burning with thirst, and did feed the hungry. With what gentle care did they touch the sores of the sick, and healed them!

And they are dead, these sisters. They died of cold, as is said on the monument. They could not bear the icy wind in which life enveloped them.

And there, further on, a slanting cross marks the place where a Talent is buried in the earth. How bold it was, how noisy, how happy! It undertook anything, wished to do everything, and was confident that it could conquer the world.

And it is dead—died but lately, quietly, and unnoticed. One day it went among men, for long it was lost there, and it came back defeated,

sad. Long it wept, long it strove to say something, and then without having said it—died.

And here is a long row of little sunken mounds. Who lies here?

Ah! yes. These are children. Little, keen, sportive Hopes. There were so many of them, they were so merry, and the soul was peopled with them. But one by one they died. They were so many, and they made such merriment in the soul.

It is quiet in the resting-place, and the leaves of the white birches rustle sadly.

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But let the dead arise! Ye grim tombs ope wide, crumble to dust ye heavy monuments, ye iron bars give place!

Be it but for one day, for one moment, give freedom to those whom ye are smothering with your weight, and darkness!

Ye think they are dead! Oh, no! they live! They are silent, but they live.

They live!

Let them see the shining of the blue, cloudless sky, let them breathe the pure air of spring, let them be intoxicated with warmth and love.

Come to me my Talent that fell asleep. Why dost so drolly rub thine eyes. Does the sun blind thee? Does it not shine bright indeed? Thou laughest? Oh laugh, laugh on—there is so little of laughter among mankind. I too will laugh with thee. Look! there flies a swallow—let us fly after it! Has the tomb made thee too heavy?

And what is that strange horror I see in thine eyes—like a reflexion of the darkness of the tomb? No, no, don't! Don't cry. Don't cry, I say!

So glorious, indeed, is life for the risen!

And ye my dear little Hopes! What charming laughing faces are yours! Who art thou, stout, funny little cherub? I know thee not. And wherefore laughest thou? Has the tomb itself been unable to afright thee? Gently, my children, gently! Why dost insult it—see'st not how little, pale and weak it is become? Live ye in the world—and do not worry me. Do ye not see that I, too, have been in the tomb, and now my head is giddy with the sun, and the air, and gladness.

Ah! how glorious is life for the risen!

Come to me ye lovely, majestic Sisters. Let me kiss your gentle white hands. What do I see? Is it bread ye are carrying? Did not the darkness of the tomb terrify you—so tender, womanly and weak; under the whelming mass did ye still think of bread for the hungry? Let me kiss your feet. I know where they will soon be going, your light, swift little feet. And I know that wherever they pass by flowers will spring up—wondrous, sweet-smelling flowers. Ye call. We will come, then.

Hither! my risen Talent—why stand gazing at the fleeting clouds. Hither! my little sportive Hopes.

Stop!

I hear music. Don't shout so, cherub. Whence these wondrous sounds? Gentle, melodious, madly joyful, and sad, they speak of life eternal——

Nay, be ye not afraid. This will soon pass away.
I weep, indeed, for joy!
Ah! how glorious is life for the risen!

THE END.